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T H E

Atrocities of a Convent,

OR THE

NECESSITY OF THINKING FOR OURSELVES,

EXEMPLIFIED IN

THE HISTORY OF A NUN.



Truth never was indebted to a Lie. Dr. YOUNG.

BY A CITIZEN OF THE WORLD.

VOL. I.

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THE AUTHOR
OF THESE
LITTLE VOLUMES

Respectfully inscribes them

TO THOSE,

WHO CAN CANDIDLY OVERLOOK THE ERRORS

OF A WORK,

WRITTEN AMIDST A THOUSAND OTHER

Pursuits and Engagements;

AND WHO

HAVE LIBERALITY ENOUGH TO APPRECIATE

THE SENTIMENTS

OF WHICH IT IS MEANT TO BE

THE VEHICLE.

2000
1/2

THE
ATROCITIES, &c.

CHAP. I.

IN the solitary monastery of *Scellières*, on the borders of *Champagne* and *Lorraine*, was a convent of monks, and another of nuns. Here, before the late revolution of *France*, the body of VOLTAIRE, the glory of literature, was concealed by a pusillanimous government from the rage of the priests.

The deep retirement of the place was scarcely ever disturbed but by the foot of some pilgrim, who came to visit the grass-grown grave of the philosopher by whose works he had been so often instructed, and entertained. This solitude was peculiarly favorable to monastic gloom, and superstitious devotion.

The convent evening bell for vespers formed a singular contrast with the meditations of VOLENCE, an elderly man, and one of the few pilgrims who had come to pay a tribute of gratitude to the memory of the great man, who had been so often calumniated, misunderstood, and mis-represented while he lived.

“ Alas !” said he, “ could the spirit that once animated him be sensible of what still passes on earth, how would he grieve to be laid so near the haunts of superstition ! How would he not have wept to have beheld the scene I witnessed this day ! Yet the victims seemed self-devoted : they may yet repent when it is too late. They have been persuaded they shall escape the misfortunes of the world ; but the miseries of a cloister are still more insupportable, and the effort it requires to bear them is often almost superior to human fortitude. Well, heaven be thanked, I am free, neither my body or my mind are enslaved !”

Thus saying he passed by the chapel

wall, and saw at a distance the procession of monks and nuns going towards it to vespers, with the two young ladies whom he had that day seen take the veil.

The youngest, ADELA DE CLAIRVILLE, who was about fifteen, had only taken the white veil and entered her noviciate, which her zealous devotion was anxious to abridge as much as possible.

She was dressed in white, and her uncommonly beautiful countenance was more expressive of ingenuousness and candour, than strongly marked by any decided character.

She appeared happy: at least she appeared never to have known distress,

or to have an idea of it. She seemed to take pleasure in the pomp of the spectacle, and to be delighted with the sacred music, which she heard as she approached the chapel.

The other, EUGENIA DE ST. ANGE, was dressed in that black veil she had so lately put on for ever.

Her eyes were fixed on the ground, and though she was not so beautiful as her companion, her countenance was expressive of much reflection and sensibility: she was rather serious than melancholy, and seemed more occupied in thinking of the importance of the step she had taken, than in regretting that she had taken it.

The pilgrim entered the chapel with them, and considered them both attentively while at prayers. ADELA joined the chorus of sacred music with fervor; EUGENIA did not, and he thought she was not attending to it. "She will regret it one day," said he to himself, "I am sure she will;" looking at her with pity and affection. "What inhuman parents must they be who can thus part with such a child as she appears! But perhaps she has none, perhaps she is left alone in the world, like myself."

When vespers were finished he returned to his hermitage, a small cottage he had taken in the neighbourhood of *Scellières*, and the nuns to their convent,

where they were shut up in their solitary cells for the night.

EUGENIA had then time to reflect upon her situation, upon the irrevocable step she had taken, and the motives she had for taking it. But her mind was in a manner stupified: she was rather plunged in a worldly reverie than in religious meditation; and finding no amusement in counting her beads, being tired with the ceremonies of the day, and fatigued with the lectures of the Abbess and her Confessor (who had been absolving her of crimes she had never committed, and threatening her with eternal damnation if she did not believe she knew not what), she laid herself down on her mattress, and soon fell asleep.

EUGENIA was the daughter of the MARQUIS DE ST. ANGE: he married a very amiable and accomplished woman, who died some years after she brought him this only daughter.

The Marquis (as most of the noblemen of that time were) was in the army. As he had married for love, his marriage was happier than most. He felt the loss of his wife deeply for a time, and could not resolve to part with her daughter: instead, therefore, of sending her to a convent he kept her at home, put her under the care of a governess, and gave her the most expensive and accomplished education that could be had in *Paris*. But as he had neither talents, nor solidity of character enough to superintend

her education himself, tenderness was the only part of a father's duty he performed; and that tenderness was unbounded.

He was gratified with her appearance and accomplishments, and prided himself upon that as upon so many merits of his own. He kept a great deal of very fashionable company; and as EUGENIA began to grow up she did the honors of his house for him.

Gay, handsome, admired and rich, she entered into all the follies of her age; but her character and understanding were good; and though not well brought up, she had profited sufficiently by the conversation of the

brilliant society she met at her father's house to be superior to many prejudices. Though not educated in a convent, she had not been taught to make use of her reason in its full extent, and still went through the forms of the worship of her country in the usual routine, yet her mind was far from being bent under the degrading yoke of superstition.—'Tis true she had never reflected deeply on the subject, yet she was acquainted with much of the reasoning which was sufficient to destroy it, when it became the subject of her meditation.

Her manner of life was generally entirely inimical to beneficial reflection, except that at that time she formed a connection with a young lady nearly of

her own age, ANGELICA DE FERVAC, whose superior education would have soon taught her to make use of her reason as she herself did.

This connection, unfortunately for her, did not take place till EUGENIA was near thirteen; ANGELICA was then about fifteen, and before she had time entirely to enlighten her friend's mind, an event happened that soon separated them.

The MARQUIS DE ST. ANGE, who was thoughtless, extravagant, and dissipated, had almost ruined his fortune, and meeting about this time with a young West-Indian heiress, he asked her in marriage: she was as anxious

for a title as he was for a fortune, and the match was not long concluding. Thus in one moment he sacrificed the happiness of his EUGENIA to the desire of continuing to shine in the world, which, from long habit indulged, had become almost a second nature!

The new MADAME DE ST. ANGE was only three years older than EUGENIA, and as she was not near so handsome, it is very easy to imagine that the presence of such a daughter-in-law was far from being agreeable to her.

As EUGENIA had been accustomed to be sole mistress in her father's house, she could but ill brook the supercilious airs of her mother-in-law, who, elated

by the idea of the great fortune she brought her husband, (who, she constantly said, without her must have been ruined,) was continually preaching up economy to her daughter-in-law; and expressing her wonder how her father could be so foolish as to give her such an expensive and fashionable education, which was good for nothing but to spoil girls, and make them conceited: as for learning, that was quite out of the question; nobody in the West Indies ever thought of it.

In consequence of these enlightened ideas, EUGENIA'S governess (who had been with her from her infancy,) was dismissed, and she was desired to confine herself more to her room, and to occupy

herself in the useful works of her sex and age. Though economy was the pretext for this conduct, it was not the real, at least, not the only reason for it.

MADAME DE ST. ANGE, was as jealous of the accomplishments, as of the beauty of her daughter-in-law, and as she was excessively ignorant, and acquainted with no subject above the cut of a gown, or the colour of a ribband, she could not bear that EUGENIA should eclipse her in conversation.

These motives however, it will easily be believed, were carefully concealed from M. DE ST. ANGE. She persuaded him that the governess she found with his daughter, was unfit for the charge,

that she would henceforth take care of her herself, and that she must begin by secluding her from company, because she knew much better than he could, how dangerous society was to the morals of a young lady, in this licentious and irreligious age.

The Marquis, who preferred peace to every thing on earth, even to his daughter's happiness, and who, besides, was at that time about sixty, and entirely governed by his young wife, allowed her to take her own way, and troubled himself no farther upon the subject; and as she always took care to treat his daughter well in his presence, and had informed her that her governess had been dismissed by her father's orders, from

motives of economy, and other good reasons, EUGENIA never therefore dared to complain: and if she had, she would probably not have been listened to.

All however went on tolerably well till MADAME DE ST. ANGE produced a son and heir. The Marquis's joy at this event was so great that in a few months his EUGENIA was almost forgotten; and consequently her step-mother's care to conceal her aversion to her diminished. This aversion she was obliged to cover by calumny. She told the Marquis that she found EUGENIA very stubborn and undocile; that she was jealous of his affection for her, and still more for her brother; that she

had been spoiled before her marriage; and that she found it absolutely impossible to govern her; that she thought it would be adviseable to board her for two years in a convent in the country, that she might lose the habit of expecting indulgencies in her father's house, and get accustomed to the controul of a step-mother, and a brother: and she had no doubt but at the end of that time EUGENIA would be perfectly tractable; she was naturally a good girl, and at her return they should find themselves quite happy together.

The weak ST. ANGE consented to this scheme, and sent for his daughter to propose it to her. He told her, that as he did not think her happy with her

step-mother, (whose manners might appear too strict to one, unfortunately so long spoiled by an over-indulgent father, and a governess,) he thought it would be better for her to go with her friend ANGELICA to her mother's in the country, and instead of returning with them to *Paris* in the winter, she might remain with the ABBESS OF SCCELLIERES, a sister of MADAME DE FERVAC's, where she would have an opportunity of finishing her education.

EUGENIA embraced the proposal with pleasure. Two years ago the idea of leaving her father would have broke her heart, but now she only thought of the happiness of being rid of her step-mother; and her father's neglect had

considerably cooled her affection for him; for parents must not think it will long survive their indifference, though by the conduct of some, one would suppose that they expect that they are to be loved and regarded, and obeyed, even in spite of bad treatment, and gross unparental behaviour.

The day of EUGENIA's departure was fixed; but notwithstanding the unmixed joy she at first felt, she could not leave her father's house, when the moment arrived, to seek protection so far from home without reflecting for a moment how hard it was that she should be forced to rejoice at it. She was, however, soon consoled by the society of her friend: the amiable and sensible ANGELICA.

attended to EUGENIA's complaints, soothed her mind, and endeavoured to fortify and enlarge it; and this new education would have made much more progress than any EUGENIA had hitherto received, had not her friend been suddenly recalled to *Paris* by the illness of MADAME DE BLEVILLE, her aunt, who had brought her up.

She was a very superior woman, and it was to her ANGELICA owed her accomplished and enlightened education.

MADAME DE FERVAC went to *Paris* with her daughter, and EUGENIA not being permitted to return with them, she was obliged to retire to the convent of *Scellières*, as her father had directed.

The Abbess, being a sister of MADAME DE FERVAC's, who had recommended EUGENIA particularly to her care, shewed her every possible attention; and as her sister had likewise informed her of EUGENIA's history, the Abbess did not despair, by increasing these attentions, of prevailing on her, some time or other, to take the veil: for as EUGENIA was descended from a noble family, and was an only daughter, the Abbess flattered herself, that she should add a considerable degree of reputation and fortune to her convent.

Accordingly she spared no pains to gain her affections. Instead of disgusting her by the strictness of a nunnery.

she shewed her nothing but indulgence, and took care to procure her every amusement; so that EUGENIA found herself as free as at *Fervac*; and though she regretted much the society of ANGELICA, yet there being several novices and young boarders in the convent, particularly ADELA DE CLAIRVILLE, niece to the Abbess, (whom we have already mentioned having taken the white veil the same day EUGENIA took the black,) when she compared her situation with the constraint she had endured at her father's house, since his second marriage, she found herself comparatively happy. The Abbess took advantage of this disposition of mind to forward her schemes upon EUGENIA.

ROSALIA, for this was her name, was a woman about six and thirty, whose person and manners were rather agreeable than otherwise. She was brought up in a convent at *Paris*, from whence she had been taken when about seventeen, to live with an old grandmother, who doated on her.

It is well known what sort of an education was received in most of the convents at *Paris*. She had there learned to consider the scrupulous devotion of the Abbess and nuns, as only a cloak to conceal the irregularity of their lives, and her conduct in the world was perfectly correspondent to these early impressions. Superstitious and devout in the presence of her grand-

mother, from whom she expected a large fortune, she amply compensated this constraint before her by the levity of her behaviour in her absence.

She was lively, vain, capricious; and at her father's return from his travels in *Italy*, where he had been for three years, he was obliged to withdraw her, his only unmarried daughter, from public observation, to conceal the consequences of an intrigue with a young officer, by sending her to a convent in the country: thus punishing his daughter for his own negligence in her education.

Her grand-mother, enraged at her conduct, withdrew her patronage and favor from her, and left her fortune to

her sister, MADAME DE FERVAC ; so that the imprudent and unfortunate ROSALIA was glad, after a short residence in the convent, to accept of her father's offer of procuring her the Abbacy of *Scellières*, where she enjoyed ease, affluence, and power ; and the advantage of continuing her former bad course of life, without being suspected.

It will easily be imagined what sort of education a woman of such principles was calculated to enforce.

Her character, which was naturally only frivolous, had been rendered, by her situation, artful, and even wicked : for there is often but a step between levity and vice.

From the unlimited power she possessed over her nuns and novices, it was scarcely possible it could have been otherwise. But as mankind are never wicked unless they have some supposed interest in being so, except when she had some intrigue of her own to conceal, or some private views to gratify, she generally treated the young people under her with apparent kindness; for she was not naturally ill tempered.

She took pleasure in conversing of the manners and amusements of a world, which she still secretly regretted, notwithstanding the exclusive power and respect she enjoyed in her convent. But though she had no interest in

constantly oppressing those committed to her charge, it was necessary to her power and authority that she should mislead and enslave their reason as much as possible.

Though the frivolity and looseness of her character prevented her being so strict with regard to the rules of devotion as some Abbesses, yet she made use of more sophistry in seducing the reason of those under her care, than most of them. And this method is, perhaps, more destructive, at least to the generality of minds, which thus become attached to their errors, because they imagine they have found out the secret of connecting faith with reason.

As the vanity of the Abbess, however, was fully equal to her ambition, she could not forbear expatiating to her young people on the many dangers she had escaped in the world; she enlarged upon the seducing arts of men, and the folly and credulity of women: and though those harangues generally concluded by lectures on propriety of conduct, her audience always paid more attention to the beginning than to the end of her discourse; and her conversation was much more calculated to fascinate their imaginations, than to strengthen their minds, and profit their morals.

Her niece, ADELA DE CLAIRVILLE, a daughter of her younger sister, who

died soon after the birth of this only child, was her most docile pupil. She had been with her from infancy, and consequently had not one sentiment or opinion that had not been inculcated by her aunt, who, as she had no reason to fear any opposition from, and had kept her constantly with herself, when not engaged with her Confessor, she brought her up with the most unbounded indulgence.

ADELA, who had not an idea beyond the convent, and who was of course courted by all the nuns, to ingratiate them with the Abbess, represented it to EUGENIA as a paradise on earth.

They became great friends; and the

Abbess encouraged this connection ; though she never suffered them to be long alone, as she suspected that the reason of EUGENIA might not be so much enslaved as that of ADELA.— However, she allowed them to sleep together, though always in her room : they were suffered to walk together, and she sometimes had the prudence to mix a little liberal literature for the amusement of EUGENIA, with the books of devotion for the use of ADELA.

She carefully excluded all romances from their reading, (though they employed all her own spare moments when alone,) yet she had selected some of our best tragedies, whence love is

excluded, such as *Athalia*, *Merope* and *Orestes*, for their perusal.

As *EUGENIA* had seen them all acted in *Paris*, they gave her the greatest pleasure ; but as these were not the only ones she had seen, she often asked why she might not be allowed to read the others, such as *Zara*, *Tancred*, and *Zulima*. She was answered that they were dangerous, and destructive to the morals of young people, by inflaming those passions it was their duty to destroy.

“ Yes, I conceive that,” said *EUGENIA*, “ for those who are to pass their life in a convent ; but I am to spend mine in the world : and I have

frequently heard MADAME DE BLEVILLE say, that tragedies, where the mischievous effects of the passions are more dwelt upon than their fascinations, exhibit lessons for the conduct of life."

"That is a very dangerous doctrine, my child. Such was unfortunately my idea, when at your age: but I soon found that I was more attentive to the charms of love, than warned by its dangers. I encreased my sensibility so much, that I was unable to withstand the disappointments I met with from the men of the world: I had transformed each of them into one of the heroes of these tragedies you are so fond of, and I found them all false and dissembling. I therefore retired into

this convent, where I acquired tranquillity, and peace of mind."

"Then you retired here of your own accord ; or rather you were obliged to seek shelter here from some love disappointment."

"I did not say that, my child ; I only said, that on seeing the wickedness of the world, I left it in disgust."

"But if all the virtuous were to act thus, what would become of the world ?"

"When they cannot stop the progress of corruption, my child, it is their duty to abandon it."

“Had they not better instruct it, by their example?”

“That is almost impossible, my child; besides, where is the marriage to be found for a virtuous woman? Tell me, have you met with many happy couples in the world?”

“Hardly one, I must confess.”

“And do wives that are married to vicious husbands generally preserve their virtue?”

“I believe not:—but I am too young to judge of that; and I always found their society very agreeable, which was all that then concerned me.”

“ Ah, my child, what a danger you have escaped ! How I rejoice that you have come to me, that I may have time to fortify your mind against the seductions of the world ! ”

“ But MADAME DE BLEVILLE is a virtuous woman ! ”

“ I believe she is ;—at least I never heard any thing to the contrary. But you know there is no general rule without an exception. Besides, her husband died when she was very young, and since that her time has been entirely taken up with the education of my niece ANGELICA. I am afraid, however, she has given her too worldly an education. I wish my sister had

sent her to me :—but she was prevented by the idea of procuring her daughter a brilliant establishment ; and by her husband, who, I fear, was little better than an atheist.”

“ An atheist ! what’s that ? ”

“ I’m glad, my child, you never heard a word which is, of late, become too fashionable. An atheist is a man who has disclaimed all religion and morality, (indeed they are the same thing ;) who calls passion, reason ; and takes its blind impulse for his sole rule of conduct ; who makes light of every sacred tie, and makes morality, our holy religion and its priests, the constant subjects of his ridicule and contempt.”

“O Heavens! is it possible such characters can exist?”

“It is but too true, my child; and I am glad you never met with any of them.”

“I assure you I never did; and if ANGELICA’s father was such a wicked man, it is very lucky she was sent so early to the care of her aunt, who, I assure you, is a most benevolent and amiable woman: and she must have been much deceived by her brother; for I recollect about two years ago, when she lost him, both she and ANGELICA were in the deepest distress.”

“He had probably concealed his

opinions carefully from them ; for they are so odious that few have the audacity openly to avow them."

" I thought you had told me that they had of late become too fashionable."

" Among a certain set, my dear ; but I only know that, by reading : and VOLTAIRE, of whose tragedies you are so fond, openly professed these principles."

" Heavens ! is it possible that such a wicked man can represent virtue in such amiable colours."

" He was obliged to conceal his opinions in public, or his books would

never have sold, and he would have lost his fame, the love of which was his ruling passion. But his private letters (which have been lately published,) are full of his detestable principles."

It was thus this artful woman daily perverted the mind of her unsuspecting pupil; and by blending morality with her religion, she contrived to make EUGENIA believe that every one who doubted of the one, was an enemy to the other.

In this disposition of mind, EUGENIA, after about three month's residence in the convent, received the following letter from MADAME DE FERVAC.

“ My dear EUGENIA !

“ It is with regret I find myself obliged to write to you upon a subject which I am sure will distress you ; but I think it better you should learn it from me than another. Your father, whom I have seen frequently since I came to town, is in so low a state of spirits as really to alarm me. I questioned him frequently concerning the cause of it; he always evaded it. At last I applied to your step-mother for an explanation; she told me, that within a few days he had discovered that his fortune was so completely ruined, that he had little or nothing to leave his daughter. She added, that she regretted this extremely, as you had been so splendidly and expensively

brought up she was afraid this disappointment would shock you very severely : and indeed, my dear EUGENIA, I think she was sincere.

“ Though you have had reason to complain of her conduct to you, yet I think you mistook her motives for it : she thought that strictness was necessary in the education of a young woman, and in this she was certainly right. Besides, it was natural she should prefer her own son to you ; though I cannot think she ever attempted to undermine you in your father’s affections, as you seem to suppose.

“ You know you were accustomed to unbounded indulgence before his

marriage; and the least restraint would naturally appear insupportable to you. Young people are so apt to mistake the motives of their elders, when they do not exactly correspond with their ideas, that I am not surprised you were impatient under her government. I hope, however, my dear, you are happy with my sister, in the retreat of innocence and peace; and I hope that your good sense, aided by her excellent advice, will enable you to bear your present misfortunes with christian patience and resignation.

“Take example by my niece ADELA: she has absolutely nothing, yet she is happy; she has taken her part: she has resolved never again to enter a

world, where poverty is despised ; and to accommodate her mind to her situation. My poor ANGELICA is at present in great distress ; her aunt is on her death-bed, and requires all her attendance, otherwise she would have written to you ; but you know her sentiments, as I am persuaded you do mine ; and that you will ever believe me,

“Your sincere friend, and well wisher,

“HENRIETTA DE FERVAC.”

EUGENIA was in a manner stupified by the reception of this letter. She knew that her father's affairs were in disorder at the time he married, but had no idea that they were in such a situation as now represented to her. She had withdrawn herself with pleasure

from her father's house, for two years, because she was then unhappy in it; but she never imagined, at the close of that period, but that she should return to the world with more liberty, and probably a brilliant establishment, when she might pass her life with her dear friend ANGELICA.

All these flattering hopes fell to the ground in a moment; and it is not to be wondered at that EUGENIA, who had been taught to consider living in the world as absolutely necessary to happiness, and an affluent fortune as necessary to live in the world, should sink at first into a state of absolute despondency, and soon after into bad health.

ANGELICA was not there to support her by her friendship and courage ; and the Abbess, on the contrary, did every thing to increase her embarrassments, by representing to her how impossible it was to live in the world without a fortune. Her sister, MADAME DE FERVAC, had informed her of EUGENIA'S situation, and hinted to her how agreeable it would be to the family could she engage her to take the veil, for that, though her father could not support her in the world, he could still afford to give her a decent maintenance in a convent.

The Abbess did not fail to put every art in practice to attain this end. She paid her unremitting attention during

her illness, often sat up with her a part of the night, and procured her every delicacy that was to be had in the neighbourhood ; and frequently took her out in the carriage with her amidst fine views, and varied prospects.

The grateful heart of EUGENIA was sensible of these attentions ; she looked upon herself as abandoned by the world ; and the death of MADAME DE BLEVILLE, which she believed to be near, precluded any idea she might have conceived of returning there with any comfort.

She often spoke of her situation to the Abbess, who appeared to sympathize with her most sincerely, and sometimes

dropped a hint how happy she might be in the convent. This was eagerly seconded by ADELA, who frequently embraced her, and assured her how glad she should be to consider as a sister her, whom she already considered as her dearest friend.

EUGENIA at last, half persecuted, half seduced, wrote to MADAME DE FERVAC, to ask her advice upon the step she was about to take. She did not write to ANGELICA; for she knew her generous disposition too well, not to be certain that she would offer to share her own fortune with her, did she know her real motives for taking the veil.

MADAME DE FERVAC answered her,

that she highly approved of her intentions; but advised her first of all to write to her father, without informing him that she had heard any thing concerning his fortune; because, if she discovered that, he would ruin himself to prevent her taking the veil; that it would be much more generous of her, provided she was resolved to go into the convent, to tell him that she had a liking for it, and could not be happy out of it. She added, that her step-mother assured her, that if her father knew the real motive of her generous sacrifice, it would break his heart; that she had also said, that were it in her power to prevent it by sacrificing a part of her fortune, she would not hesitate; but that it was already settled on her son, and a

daughter she had lately brought M. DE ST. ANGE. MADAME DE FERVAC concluded her letter by praising EUGENIA's heroism, and filial piety, and exhorting her to persevere.

The unhappy and too credulous EUGENIA allowed herself to be persuaded, wrote the prescribed letter to her father, and received for answer, that, though he was grieved beyond measure to be separated from her for ever, he should think himself criminal in contradicting her holy resolution. He begged her not to be precipitate; and promised her a visit in the course of the ensuing summer.

EUGENIA was not surprised at this

answer ; she had made up her mind to the part she was to take ; at least she thought she had. She really loved her father ; though her attachment was not so enthusiastic as to have been alone sufficient to have influenced her in taking such a step : but she saw no inducement for her to return to the world, and felt herself happy for the present where she was. Young people do not reflect much on the past, and hardly ever think of any thing beyond the present.

She therefore told the Abbess that she was ready to take the white veil, whenever she thought it proper. She did not defer it long, as will easily be believed ; and about a month after she

had received her father's letter, she entered upon her noviciate.

As the mind is generally easier in a state of certainty than suspense, especially when that certainty is removed to some distance, EUGENIA's health recovered, and she, in some measure, resumed her wonted gaiety.

MADAME DE BLEVILLE had died a few weeks before; and EUGENIA's letters to ANGELICA were more taken up in consoling her friend for her loss, than in speaking of herself. When EUGENIA however informed her that she had taken the white veil, ANGELICA was roused from her own grief, and did all in her power to persuade EUGENIA

not to shorten her noviciate, which, by her letter, she seemed inclined to do. But as ANGELICA knew that all the letters were opened, she was obliged to be very cautious in her expressions; and only begged her to reflect well upon the importance of the eternal and irrevocable engagement she was about to make, before she entered into it; and to wait at least till her return to the country.

The Abbess appeared to think this request quite reasonable; but wrote to her sister to beg her to delay her return as long as possible, as she was afraid that her daughter was rather too worldly minded, and might persuade her young novice to renounce her vows.

AS MADAME DE FERVAC was as sincere in her devotion, as her sister was hypocritical, she entered into her design with fervor ; and pretended to her daughter to be detained in *Paris* by important affairs.

Yet MADAME DE FERVAC was what is called a good woman, but, from her weakness, she had lent her support to the perpetration of a crime. If then, good intentions may be so easily misled, how important is it that principles should be early fixed in the minds of young people ; and that these principles should be pure ! But when it is admitted, that to attain any end whatever, any means are lawful, there must soon be an end of virtue.

MADAME DE FERVAC had been deceived by MADAME DE ST. ANGE: but as she thought the liberty and happiness of a daughter could never be put in competition with the embarrassments of a father: and as she was likewise persuaded that a nun was a celestial being, sojourning upon earth, she was easily prevailed on to forward the projects of this wicked woman; the iniquity of which she could not suspect. For sincerity, and almost every amiable endowment, if the mind is not enlightened, are the fittest qualities to work upon by designing hypocrites, to attain their wicked purposes.

Six months after the commencement of EUGENIA'S noviciate, she took the

black veil, on the same day ADELA took the white, as we have already said.

Some days after, ANGELICA and her mother returned to the country ; and EUGENIA, whose spirits had begun to flag, and who already thought she perceived a change in the Abbess's conduct towards her, was overjoyed to see her old friend.

ANGELICA, who had not been informed that her friend had taken the veil, was so shocked to see her in this mournful dress, that she had almost fainted ; but recollecting that her future admission into the convent depended upon her circumspect behaviour, she constrained herself as much as possible ;

excused her agitation as arising from her joy at seeing EUGENIA ; and her late vexation, and bad health.

The Abbess anxious to learn all the fashionable *Parisian* intelligence from her sister, and not afraid that her victim could now escape from her, allowed the young people to converse at liberty in her parlour, while she retired with her sister to her apartment.

She left ADELA with them ; but as she thought it her duty to pray most part of the day during her noviciate, she soon left the friends by themselves.

“ At last we are at liberty, my dear EUGENIA ; ” said ANGELICA, “ for

heaven's sake tell me how I find you in this dress."

" I have already given you my reason," said EUGENIA.

" Was it your only reason? Has no disappointment of the heart forced my friend into this solitude?"

" None I assure you, I do not even understand the nature of such a disappointment. You are the only person I am attached to in the world, out of the convent, except my father; and he seems to have forgotten me."

" My dear EUGENIA, if you are so much attached to me, why not come

and reside with my mother and me? You know how happy your society would have made me."

"I have already told you I had a vocation."

"A vocation! what is that? Do not deceive yourself, my dear friend, you cannot deceive me. I know you used to laugh at these superstitious ideas in the world."

"I mean," said EUGENIA, with an assumed firm tone, "that I wished to pass the rest of my life in a convent. Besides, my friend, when you and I lived in the world, we were too much accustomed to hear sacred things made light of."

“ Sacred things ! when ! never that I recollect. The only sacred things, I know of, are moral duties and social duties ; and my late aunt, my benefactress, my friend, performed them all most religiously.”

“ I know your aunt was a most benevolent and amiable woman ; but if you will allow me to say so, she considered devotion as very inferior to moral duties ; at least, though I often heard her recommend the latter to you, I never heard her mention the former.”

“ And do you consider it as superior.”

CHAP. II.



AT that moment the Abbess and her sister entered the parlour; MADAME DE FERVAC and her daughter returned home, and EUGENIA retired to her cell, where the short conversation she had had with ANGELICA made a deep impression on her mind, and she impatiently expected a repetition of her visit, as the only event that could relieve the insipid monotony of her new life.

ANGELICA, whose spirits had never recovered her aunt's death, was hurt beyond measure at the loss of her friend; for she considered her as lost, and buried alive in the convent. She had flattered herself with the agreeable idea of spending her life with her, and communicating her ideas upon every subject, in confidence; without which, conversation to an enlightened mind, is but a tiresome circle of trifling, and a constant restraint.

She had been accustomed to think aloud almost from her infancy. Her aunt, MADAME DE BLEVILLE, had always treated her more like a friend, than a pupil. Instead of giving her prejudices she had taught her to make use of her

reason; she encouraged her to ask questions, and always answered them, as far as was in her power. In short, ANGELICA's education was in a manner finished, when that of other young people is hardly begun.

Naturally high-spirited, and having been early taught to depend on her own reason, and conscience, she had a strong sense of the dignity of human nature; but from the extreme sweetness of her disposition, and the correctness of the principles early instilled into her, she had learned to pity the vices of mankind; and to consider them as more dangerous follies, which had been occasioned by the bad laws, and bad institutions of society. Naturally enthu-

siastic, and ingenuous, though her hatred for vice was strong and irreconcilable, her compassion for the vicious was sincere.

To such a character the loss of such a friend as MADAME DE BLEVILLE was irreparable, but her grief had subsided into a tranquil and uncomplaining melancholy, a thousand times more affecting, in the opinion of the discerning few, than the loudest complaints, and the most apparently inconsolable grief; which generally originate more from the incapability of suffering a change of habit, and from moral or physical weakness, than from the constant regret, and tender recollection, of the memory of a departed friend.

In this disposition of mind it will easily be conceived, that ANGELICA's disappointment at finding EUGENIA had taken the veil, was great. In the society of her mother she found no consolation. She had never passed above a few weeks with her at a time ; and as MADAME DE FERVAC considered ANGELICA as the spoiled child of her aunt, she generally employed the short time her daughter spent with her in the country, in maternal exhortations to prudence and circumspection, and in harangues upon the impropriety of the modern ideas of allowing young people to judge for themselves, and to mix in the conversation of their elders.

Her lectures too upon the utility of

confession, and the constant necessity of prayer, &c. had no end ; and though ANGELICA had too much good sense, and too much respect for herself, to shock her mother by openly contradicting her opinions ; yet, her exhortations had no other effect upon her, than tiring her to death ; and though she made no answer, yet her mother could not help perceiving that she made no progress.

This produced peevishness and ill-humour on the part of MADAME DE FERVAC, whose ideas of parental prerogative were theoretically unlimited : but as she could not help, in spite of herself, feeling respect for her daughter, and as she was too weak, and too

indolent, to be tyrannical, she allowed ANGELICA to dispose of her time as she pleased ; and though she condemned her style of reading, she never attempted to change it.

ANGELICA therefore, as soon as she could leave her mother alone, after dinner, generally took a walk in the woods, taking a book with her, and frequently did not come back till supper time.

She had not returned immediately to the convent, for as she was rather disgusted with the new devotion of EUGENIA, and had not determined on the line of conduct she was to pursue ; EUGENIA having taken an irrevocable

engagement; she wished to give herself time for reflection before she repeated her visit. This resolution was strengthened by the accounts her mother, who visited the convent almost every day, brought of the sincerity and warmth of EUGENIA's devotion. And these accounts were true; for EUGENIA, impatient of a state of doubt, and at first harassed by the hints ANGELICA had dropped, had resolved to seek for refuge in the new duties of the life she had irrevocably imposed on herself.

Such is often the case with strong characters, and ardent imaginations: they generally begin by deceiving themselves; and supposing that the conduct they have pursued is indispensable. If

this is true in the affairs of common life, how much more so is it when religion, and eternal happiness, are supposed to be concerned !

EUGENIA endeavoured to persuade herself that she was securing happiness in heaven, that she might forget she had ever had the idea of enjoying it upon earth ; and had the absence of ANGELICA lasted much longer, it is probable that she would have become a complete enthusiast ; though her motives for taking the veil were, at first, certainly not founded on religion.

In one of ANGELICA'S evening rambles she directed her walk towards the chapel of the convent. It was the 30th

of May, the anniversary of the death of VOLTAIRE, and she went to visit the grave of that great man.

She sat down by the side of it, and pulling a book out of her pocket, which contained his Essay on Man, Poems on Natural Law, and on the Earthquake of Lisbon, she began to read the last production; the melancholy strain of which was most consonant to her state of mind; and she was particularly struck with the following passage:

* “ Ce monde, ce théâtre, et d’orgueil et d’erreur,
Est plein d’infortunés qui parlent de bonheur.
Tout se plaint, tout gémit en cherchant le bien-être,

* “ This world, this theatre of vanity
And error, swarms with miserable men,
Who speak of happiness they never knew.

Nul ne voudrait mourir, nul ne voudrait renaître.
Quelquefois dans nos jours consacrés aux douleurs,
Par la main du plaisir nous essuyons nos pleurs.
Mais le plaisir s'envole et passe comme une ombre,
Nos chagrins, nos regrets, nos pertes sont sans
nombre.

Le passé n'est pour nous qu'un triste souvenir ;
Le présent est affreux, s'il n'est point d'avenir,
Si la nuit du tombeau détruit l'être qui pense,
Un jour tout sera bien, voila notre espérance.

All mourn, all weep, and search for it in vain.
None wish for death, none would be born again,
Sometimes in our sad days, consum'd by grief,
The hand of pleasure dries our tears awhile ;
But pleasure, like a shadow, fleets away :
Our losses, griefs, regrets, are numberless—
The past is but a melancholy dream,
The present would be insupportable,
If mankind for a future did not hope ;
And if the soul, that thinking principle,
Is buried with the body, in the grave.

All will be well, one day : that hope consoles ;
But to maintain that all is well just now,
Is but illusion, a false theory—

Tout est bien aujourd'hui, voilà l'illusion.
Les sages me trompaient et Dieu seul a raison.
Humble dans mes souhaits, soumis dans ma souffrance,
Je ne m'élève point contre la providence.

Sur un ton moins lugubre on me vit autrefois
Chanter des doux plaisirs les séduisantes loix.
D'autres tems, d'autres mœurs : instruit par la
vieillesse,
Des humains égarés partageant la foiblesse,
Dans un épaisse nuit cherchant à m'éclairer,
Je ne sais que souffrir et non pas murmurer.

Who says so, errs : I put my trust in heav'n.
Submissive in my suff'rings, and complaints,
I do not murmur against providence.

Once when the fire of youth inspir'd my verse,
I sung not on this melancholy strain ;
I sang of pleasure then, and social joy :
But time has chang'd the current of my thoughts ;
Instructed by old age, and by distress,
Sharing the weakness of unhappy men,
And in the darkness, where I now am plung'd,
Seeking to find a path to guide my steps,
I've learn'd to suffer, and suppress complaint."

“ If such is the fate of genius in the world,” exclaimed she, “ how small are the encouragements to virtue ! and can we be surprised it is so seldom practised.”

“ If the treatment you met with,” looking at the grave of VOLTAIRE, “ had reduced you to this state of melancholy, shall ordinary men complain of their sufferings.”

She then thought of the many miseries of every kind that abound in the world ; of public misfortunes, and individual sorrows. From these general reflections, the transition to her own private loss, was natural ; she recollected how frequently her aunt and she had

read this poem together, the enlightened and philosophical ideas it had suggested to her, the instruction she used to reap from her conversation; and that she had for ever lost that instruction and that conversation.

The sombre melancholy of the place increased her's: she sat for a long time almost insensible that it was growing dark, and wept with more pleasure than she had known since the death of her aunt.

She was roused from a reverie, by the echo of a step near her. She started; and, looking up, saw an elderly man advancing slowly towards her: they were mutually surprised at

seeing each other ; and at the same moment expressed it. He begged pardon for the interruption ; and perceiving that she was in tears, he looked at her with that compassionate tenderness, more expressive than if he had made a thousand offers of service.

“ You have not interrupted me,” said she, rising, and putting the book into her pocket ; “ it was time that I should return home. But, good God ?” said she, looking at him stedfastly, “ I am certain I have seen you before : M. DE VOLENCE, is it not ?”

“ ’Tis true” ; said he, “ I flattered myself I had been unknown in this place.”

“ You shall still remain so, for me, if it is your wish,” said ANGELICA.

“ I beg pardon,” interrupted he, “ I have not the honor of knowing who addresses me.”

“ It is so long since we have met, and I was then so young, that I am not surprised you should have forgotten ANGELICA DE FERVAC; but I shall never forget you, to whom I owe so much instruction.”

“ The daughter of my dearest friend !” exclaimed he, taking her hand, “ how is it possible I did not recognise you ? Where is your father ?”

“It is about two years since I lost him,” said ANGELICA.

“Was it for his loss I found you in tears, my dear child? The loss of such a father, and such a friend, accounts for them too well. I have no more to shed. But yours will surely soon be dried by your worthy aunt, MADAME DE BLEVILLE.”

“It is but a few months since, I lost her too;” said she.

“She too gone! heavens! how I sympathise with you! Since man by nature is mortal, why is he so sensible to the loss of friends? Why does painful recollection torment his existence?”

“I would not lose the recollection of my aunt for the world. Instead of tormenting, it consoles my existence.”

“You are young, my child. Your mind is strong enough to indulge painful ideas. There are some misfortunes that cannot be thought of. At your time of life hope supports you, unknown to yourself; at mine, I have none. My future prospects are black and dreary; and my past life is like an unquiet and melancholy dream. But at your age it is your duty to dissipate, not to indulge grief.”

“I am sensible of that, and I was endeavouring to get acquainted with it as much as possible.”

“That is a dangerous experiment, alone, and in this solitary place. You are too near a convent, my child: never take refuge there. It is worse than the grave; it is the residence of infamy and crimes.” As he said this, he looked wildly around: ANGELICA started.

“Of crimes!” said she. “O my poor EUGENIA!”

VOLENCE heard her not. He walked about for some minutes; then returning to ANGELICA, and commanding himself as much as possible:

“You promise me,” said he, “that you will never go into a convent.”

“ Had such been my intention, you would not have found me by the grave of this philosopher. I have not so far forgot your instructions.”

“ Thank heaven! thank heaven!”—said he: “ I have at last found one independent mind. Had this great and amiable philosopher many disciples such as you, my child, the world would not be so tormented by superstition and tyranny as it now is, and I fear ever will be.”

“ Let us hope better of mankind,” said ANGELICA.

“ They are unworthy of being reformed. Stakes and dungeons are the

only rewards these mad-men prepare for those who wish to cure them. Let them remain mad then."

Though ANGELICA'S reason was not convinced, yet she was over-awed by the tone with which he pronounced the last sentence, and she did not contradict him.

"You have been very unfortunate, I fear, since we parted," said she, as they left the chapel.

"I have indeed; but my story is long, and I fear too horrible for you."

"If you can bear to tell it," said ANGELICA, "I certainly can bear to hear it."

“ I have not time to enter upon it now.”

“ But shall I not have the pleasure of seeing you at my mother’s ?”

“ Your mother ! she is the sister of the ABBESS DE SCCELLIERES,—is she not ?”

“ She is : but she is a very different woman. She may be weak, but I am sure she is not wicked.”

“ Weakness is not to be depended upon, my child. She might discover my residence here to her sister ; and I have strong reasons for concealing it from her. My real name is not known

here. I conceal it under that of MONT-JOCE ; and it is of the greatest consequence to me, that my real name should remain unknown."

"You may depend upon my secrecy," said ANGELICA ; "but shall we not meet again?"

"Whenever you can come to me in the environs of the chapel, it will give me the greatest pleasure ; and you can easily contrive it in your evening walks : I shall have many things to say to you."

ANGELICA accepted the proposal with joy ; and promising to meet at six o'clock next evening, they parted, and returned home.

They were both equally impatient for the interview; for they had long wanted a friend to whom they might communicate their mutual ideas, and sufferings.

CHAP. III.



NEXT evening they met in the cloisters of the chapel, and after they had walked a little way together: "There are few young people," said VOLENCE, "who would come so far to meet a man of my age, and who would be anxious to hear my melancholy story."

"That is the fault of their education," said ANGELICA.

“ I will tell it you,” said he, “ at least I will attempt it, whatever it may cost me, perhaps it will relieve me. You are the first human being in this place, who ever heard it.”

They sat down upon one of the grave-stones, and VOLENCE taking ANGELICA's hand, “ You recollect when you were about twelve years old,” said he, “ having often seen me at your aunt's, in company with D'ALEMBERT, DIDEROT, and CONDORCET. Your aunt's was one of the few houses where we were at liberty to discuss our principles; those principles which have been so much calumniated, and which however only consist in the love of mankind, a desire for their improvement

and happiness, and a consequent hatred of tyranny and superstition : but as this country is chiefly inhabited by tyrants, and slaves, the hatred these sentiments, and we who held them inspired, was to be expected.

“ As I had sold out of the army some years before ; this step alone was sufficient to irritate a suspicious government against me ; and as I made no secret of my connection with the philosophers, and, perhaps rather too imprudently, divulged my sentiments in mixed companies, from a desire of enlightening my countrymen, it is no wonder that I had enemies.

“ A young man of whom I thought I

had made a convert, but whom I afterwards found to be no better than a spy of the police, denounced me to the state, as the author of a pamphlet that made a considerable noise at that time, and in the middle of the night I was seized by some of its satellites, and thrown into one of the dungeons of the *Bastille*.

“I will not dwell upon the horrors of my confinement; these I could have supported: I could even have made myself happy with the idea that I deserved well of my country, and gloried in suffering in such a cause: I had the approbation of my own conscience, and that of my friends. But I had left my affections in the world; and I feared that my CLARA’s inhuman father (who

already suspected our attachment, might take advantage of my confinement, to throw her into a convent. This idea pursued my waking thoughts, and haunted my dreams, when I slept, but that was seldom; my spirits were wasted by excruciating anxiety; and after a twelvemonth's confinement, I sunk into a state of hopeless despair.

“ My friends were ignorant where I was: I had not received one word of consolation since I had entered these dreadful dwellings of torture and of wretchedness. I am convinced I should not have survived it above a week longer, if the jailor, a man of more humanity than is generally to be met with in his profession, had not men-

tioned me to the FORT MAJOR, DE LOSMES DE SALBRAY, who is as well known for his tenderness towards the unfortunate prisoners, as DE LANNAY, the governor, is for his avarice and cruelty.

“DE LOSMES came into my dungeon about eleven o'clock, one night, and brought me some wine and refreshments. He was much affected at seeing me so emaciated ; and told me, that since the jailor had informed him of my situation, he had made assiduous enquiries concerning the motives of my detention, and that he had discovered that I had been denounced as the author of a political pamphlet, by a police-officer, whom he named, and whom I

knew to be the young man on whose friendship I had relied. M. DE LOSMES told me, that he despaired of my being able to obtain my liberty, for, having sold out of the army without assigning a reason, I was already no favourite at court; and that, besides, my father was doing all in his power against me.

“ This I easily believed; because I knew that, offended by my principles, he had for some years past been trying, by every art of chicane, to defraud me of an inheritance left me by my mother; and as he had several friends among the infamous and venal judges of the Parliament of *Paris*, I had no doubt of his success, however unjust his claim; thanks to our absurd jurisprudence!

“ This selfish and sordid motive had considerably encreased his zeal for his government and religion ; and made him anxious to keep me in prison as long as possible.

“ He and my CLARA’s father were, unfortunately, what is called great friends ; and I was certain they would both join their influence against us. My father had informed her’s of my principles ; and as M. DE VILLEFRANCHE——”

“ VILLEFRANCHE ! ” exclaimed ANGELICA ; “ has he a son ? ”

“ He has,” answered VOLENCE ;
“ and never was a son so different from

his father. He was then in *America*, or he would have protected his sister."

"I am sure he would."

"Do you know him then?"

"O yes, very well. He has often spoke of his unfortunate sister, and constantly laments her death."

"O God!"

They were both silent for some time.

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you," said ANGELICA; "pray go on with your history, if it is possible. I cannot express to you how much it interests me."

“ I think I was speaking of the interested views of M. DE VILLEFRANCHE. He knew I was to lose my fortune, and this was another reason for his having resolved never to consent to his daughter's marriage with me. She had refused a very rich match on my account ; and her father had carried her to the country, and threatened her with a convent if she persisted in disobeying his absolute commands, by refusing the husband he had pointed out for her.

“ Though I knew CLARA's affection for me to be great, and her mind stronger than that of her sex generally is, from the bad education they receive, yet I also knew her to be young, alone,

and entirely in her father's power, for she had lost her mother about two years before. I knew too, that she would prefer death to marrying any other than myself; and that her father might employ a thousand stratagems to persuade her I was either married, or dead, if he could not otherwise overcome her resistance; and that she might then be glad to bury herself for ever in a convent, whichever of the reports she believed.

“As M. DE LOSMES still continued his kind attentions to me, and had even removed me from my dungeon to a tolerable apartment, I ventured to tell him part of my history; and conjured him, if possible, to get me some

intelligence of CLARA DE VILLEFRANCHE. He promised he would, and in about a month after I had made the request, he came into my room with a letter in his hand, and with a melancholy look, begging me to summon up all my fortitude, told me, that CLARA, believing I was dead, as her father had informed her, had taken the white veil in the convent of *Scellières*, and that her noviciate was to expire in a month.

“ This news almost distracted me; but instead of sinking into despair, as formerly, I employed all my thoughts upon the possibility of effecting my escape. Yet how was I to accomplish this? I could not entrust DE LOSMES with it; for even if he were willing to

assist me, he had it not in his power ; and though he had, what a return would it have been for all his kindness to me, to have exposed him to lose his place, the only maintenance of his wife and family ; for whose sake, alone, he consented to continue in such an odious employment, as he had frequently told me ; and though the only use he made of it, was to console the unfortunate prisoners ! But to whom could I apply ? Besides I had no money, for all that I had about me, which was twenty louis, and my watch, had been taken from me, when I was carried to the *Bastille*.

“Of this I informed DE LOSMES ; and told him what an obligation I should consider it, if he could get it restored

to me, as I wished to purchase some books, and other little necessities for myself, to amuse me during my solitary confinement.

“ In a few days he brought them to me : and I then began to employ the jailor, who I have already said was humane, in procuring some little articles for me, and when I saw that he performed these commissions with pleasure, I entered into conversation with him, and found that he was disgusted with his situation, and would gladly leave it, could he be assured of procuring himself a means of subsistence.

“ After sounding him for some days, I at last ran the risk of proposing my

escape to him. At first he appeared startled: but on my offering to give him my watch, and all the money I had, if he could by any means favor my design, he promised to consider how it might be effected. He returned at night, and told me that if I could insure him a subsistence, and conceal him from the vengeance of government, he would escape with me. Astonished, and delighted, I embraced the honest-hearted jailor, and assured him, he might depend upon my eternal gratitude.

“ Every thing being concerted, he entered my room next night with a suit of regimentals, and giving me the watchword, bid me follow him. He opened the inner doors himself, and telling the

sentinels of the outer ones, that I was a sentinel of the inner-prison, sent with him upon an important message by the governor, we passed through all the gates, without examination: and we gained the suburbs of *St. Antony* in safety.

“ We proceeded on together till we came to the house of my friend the MARQUIS DE C——. The watch was luckily not at hand, I knocked gently at the servants’ windows, and begged them to open the door, as I had something of great importance to impart to their master. An old man, bringing a candle to the window, instantly recollected me; but on my making a sign to him, he had prudence enough not to name me. He opened the door, gave

me the most cordial welcome, and told me that his master was not yet in bed; and that I should find him in his study. I flew into the room, and was in his arms in an instant.

“ I will not attempt to describe the joy of our meeting. He had only learnt where I was within a few days, and could hardly believe I had effected my escape. I shewed him the man to whom I owed my deliverance, and had he loaded him with a thousand personal benefits, he could not have shewed more gratitude. He promised to procure him a post, and calling up his old servant, recommended him to his care, and desired that he might be kept concealed till further orders.

We then sat down together; and he asked me what project I had formed, or whether I meant to leave the kingdom; offering with the most friendly solicitude to assist me in every respect, as far as was in his power.

He said, that as I most unjustly lost my cause in the Parliament of *Paris*, he would advise me to transport myself to *America*; that he would give me a letter to DR. FRANKLIN; that he was sure I would be well received: and that if I would do his friends, and him, the favor to accept of pecuniary assistance, I should soon be out of the reach of our iniquitous government.

“But my heart is in *France*,” said I.

He asked me if I was married; I said I was engaged. He asked if I would trust him with the young lady's name, and said he would write to her of my escape, and where I was, that I could easily be concealed in his house till the answer came, and that if she had courage enough to join me, we could go to *America* together.

“There is still some virtue in the world, said I, squeezing his hand, but injustice is stronger than you are. My CLARA is in a convent, forced there by her inhuman parents; and perhaps before this time she is lost to me for ever.

“O my poor friend! my wretched

country, said he, and burst into tears. We wept together. They were the first tears I had shed for a long time, and relieved me much. Who shall say that true philosophy is insensible? I wish it were.

“Take courage, said he to me, at last, recovering himself a little. Perhaps you are still in time to save her. Her noviciate is to expire in a few days, said I. I then told him her whole history.

“I know not what to recommend to you, said he, after a long silence. If you do not succeed in your escape, you will both infallibly be confined for life in separate dungeons; and it is a great chance that you do. But if I try not

something, said I, I shall certainly lose her for ever !

“ It was then agreed, that I should change my name, to avoid being taken up by my father, or by government.

“ Next day he furnished me with some clothes, and an hundred louis, which he insisted upon my accepting ; and made me promise to write to him.

“ By the interest of his friend, the DUKE DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULT, he procured my friendly jailor a post in one of the farms.

“ I rode post to *Scellières*, and stopped not night or day till I reached

the environs of the convent. After some consideration I resolved to dress myself like an old woman, and to ask admission to MADemoiselle DE VILLEFRANCHE, to implore her charity. Accordingly I presented myself at the gate of the convent, and was admitted. CLARA, attended by an old nun, came to the grate. I cannot describe my emotions upon seeing her ; but as great fear sometimes inspires great courage, I commanded myself wonderfully, and, disguising my voice as well as I could, I told her in a few words my necessities ; at the same time putting a note into her hand, which I said would inform her farther.

“I had prevailed upon an old woman

in the neighbourhood to lend me her certificate, in which I had inclosed a few lines informing CLARA of part of my history, and conjuring her, if she valued my life, to consent to escape with me before to-morrow morning: that I would wander about the garden wall of the convent, after the time of evening prayers, to wait for her answer.

“ CLARA had presence of mind enough to give me some money, and tell me she would make farther enquiries. The old nun told her she must see the petition; but as she was almost blind, CLARA had time enough to conceal my note in her bosom, before she gave the other paper. I retired as speedily as

possible, for fear of being examined more closely.

“The moment the bell for vespers was finished, and it began to grow dark, having thrown off my disguise, I scaled the wall of the garden by the help of a ladder of cords, and came close under those of the convent, where after having waited some time, I saw the glimmering light of a dark lanthorn. When I was going to hide myself among the long grass, the person who carried it gave me a friendly wave with her hand, and putting her finger on her lips, gave me a note, in which CLARA informed me she would meet me in the chapel between ten and eleven; and that then if I could effect her escape from her

prison, into which she had been deceived by a false report of my death, she was ready to go with me.

“ The woman who brought the letter then told me, that she was a *tourrière* of the convent, and that I need not be afraid of trusting her, for that the young novice had told her that I was her husband, whom she had believed to be dead ; and that as she had not yet taken her vows, the *tourrière* added, that she thought she was doing no harm in uniting a husband and wife, who she understood had been wrongfully separated by their parents, from pecuniary motives. She even added, that she would shew us a subterraneous passage, under the altar, which would conduct

us to the road without the garden wall, and with which she was we acquainted.

“I perceived by the style of conversation of this woman, that she was the pander of the vices of the Abbess, and Nuns; and that I was not the first man she had conducted into that passage. How dreadful for virtue to be obliged to employ such instruments! But the crime is to be imputed to the unjust government, or laws, whose inhuman oppression forces the unprotected citizen to make use of art, to save himself from tyranny! Such deceit, however, cannot be called a crime. The oppressors have lost the right of expecting sincerity; and this inevitable conse-

quence of such a system, shews its horror in the full extent.

“ This woman conducted me to the chapel, and concealed me below the altar, where she desired me to remain till she lifted up the trap. I waited there for about three hours in a state of the most inexpressible agony of suspense. I thought every moment I heard voices above me, speaking in a threatening tone. I figured to myself that the vault where I was then concealed, was the descent to the prisons, and I every moment expected to see my CLARA descend there as a prisoner, instead of my bride.

“ At length, however, about eleven

o'clock, the trap was lifted, and I received my CLARA, almost lifeless with fear, in my arms; I carried her down the steep and dark stairs, lighted only by the tourrière's dark lanthorn, who, shutting the trap after her, followed us into a long and dark passage. She had warned us not to speak; and it was easy to comply with this, as both our emotions were too great to be expressed by words. We stopped for some time in this passage for CLARA to throw off her veil, and dress herself in the habit of a peasant, which I had taken care to bring with me.

“We then proceeded to the trap that led to the outside of the garden wall, where taking leave of the tourrière, I

gave her twenty louis, and we made the best of our way to a neighbouring cottage ; here I had engaged a horse, and taking CLARA behind me, we took the direct road to *Paris*, but soon turning off, we rode as fast as possible through bye-ways to *Lorraine*, and stopped not till we came to *Condrecourt*, the nearest village in *Lorraine*, where we were obliged to halt a little, to procure CLARA some rest after her long journey. She had scarcely recovered her surprise and joy at seeing me again, and could hardly believe herself out of the convent.

Our fear of being taken was so great that we had no conversation on the road ; and when we first found

ourselves alone, and secure, it became necessary to settle the plan of our future operations.

“ We communicated all that had happened to each other. I informed her of the friendship C—— had shewn me, and of the advice he had given us, to go to *America*. But we both agreed that it would be imprudent to proceed so soon on our journey; and that it would be better to conceal ourselves in some obscure village, till the noise of her escape, and mine, had in some measure subsided. But CLARA insisted that our marriage should take place immediately, to prove to her father and mine, should any misfortune happen to either of us, that our union was meant

to be permanent, and was not the common effect of a violent and transient passion.

“It was in vain I represented to her, that our marriage, however performed, would not be valid in this country; that we had no need of such a ceremony to be sure of each other’s constancy, that we could be publicly married when we arrived in *America*; and that, whether we were married or not, it would make no difference in her treatment, were she retaken.

“She still persisted in thinking it would make a difference in her father’s opinion, and conjured me to think of some means of procuring a priest.

Accordingly, after some consideration, we resolved to pass for two Swiss, to say that I had been obliged to leave the canton of *Berne* for some state offence, and that I had brought a young woman with me, to whom I was anxious to be married.

“ The curate of a neighbouring parish, either believing or pretending to believe this story, married us privately for a considerable sum of money. I sold the horse upon which we had come from *Scellières*; and we proceeded on foot, by slow journeys, to *Clermont*, in the neighbourhood of which we took a small cottage.

“ Here we remained under our

feigned name for about two months, the happiest period of my life, which passed away like a dream; and the recollection of which, adds to the bitterness of the sufferings I have since endured.

“Thinking that our escape had by this time fallen into oblivion, we proceeded westward to *Crespy*, about a day’s journey from *Paris*, whence I wrote to C——, informing him, in as guarded terms as possible, that I had redeemed my CLARA from her prison, that we were now married, and on our way to *America*, and that we would wait at *Crespy* for his answer.

“We waited there in the utmost anxiety for about a week; no answer

arrived. My wife sometimes suspected that our friend had betrayed us. I was certain that these suspicions were unfounded; but began to be afraid that I had been very imprudent, in addressing my letter directly to my friend; that he had probably never received it; or that if he had I might perhaps have exposed him to danger. These ideas made me very uneasy. Our money too was almost spent, and I began to fear we should not have enough to pay our passage.

“ We had just gone to bed, and were conversing upon the propriety of setting out on our journey next day, without waiting for the answer to our letter, when we heard a noise at the door of

our cottage, and four or five ruffians instantly rushed into the room. I sprung up in a moment, and seized a pistol which lay upon the table, but I was immediately disarmed. A *lettre de cachet* was shown, and we were ordered to dress instantly. What could we do? I was held, and could not assist my wife; and in such a situation courage is only another torment. CLARA had fainted through fright, and a wretch of a woman, these hirelings of despotism had brought with them, put on her clothes in this situation; and carrying her out of the cottage, forced her into a carriage with two of these monsters, while I, after being dressed, was bound and put into another, by the

other two wretches, and both carriages drove off in different directions.

“ I shall never forget my CLARA’s screams as they died away ; and when I heard them no more I sunk into a state of absolute stupefaction, so as to be completely insensible to suffering, for I don’t know how long ; and I did not begin to recover my recollection till we got near *Brest*. When I did, the image of my CLARA dragged into a dungeon, distracted me. I was almost certain that she was pregnant ; and this idea became too much for reason to support. I was seized with a brain fever, and upon my recovery, the first object that struck me was the sea, out of the cabin window. I asked where they were

carrying me, and was answered, 'to the gallies, which is too mild a punishment for a wretch like you.'

"During the rest of my voyage round *France*, from *Brest* to *Marseilles*, I asked no more questions; and I should certainly have put an end to my existence, had not the hope of once more seeing my CLARA, I knew not where, or how, supported me almost unknown to myself.

"In the *Bay of Biscay* we were overtaken by a dreadful storm, and our ship, after struggling some time against it, at last struck upon a rock, and went to pieces. Most of the crew endeavoured to save themselves by swimming;

and I know not what instinct made me desirous to preserve a life I had so little reason to love; unless it was the idea of my wife being still in the world; otherwise I should have sought that death I was then so anxious to avoid. I clung to a plank, and after floating on it some time, and being carried by the waves to a great distance from the ship, (none of whose crew I have ever since seen) I was humanely taken up by a Spanish fishing boat.

“The poor men, who were on board her, shewed me all the kindness in their power; and on our landing at *Bilboa*, one of them offered to take me into his hovel for the night, and share the scanty meal of his wife and family with me: in

short, poor as he was, he shewed me greater benevolence than I should have met with in the houses of most of the rich ; and that night, upon my bed of rushes, I slept more soundly than I had done since my separation from my CLARA ; for though I was in a foreign land, and deprived of every thing in the world, yet I was free, and could flatter myself with the prospect of some time or other, returning to my own country ; and perhaps being able to discover the destiny of my wife.

“ As I had no money in the world, I was obliged to propose to the fisherman, who understood a little French, to allow me to assist him in his occupations. He accepted my proposal with pleasure.

I went out fishing with him, made nets and baskets, cut faggots, and carried burdens: in short, I rendered myself as useful to my benefactor as possible, and had the satisfaction of repaying his benefits.

“ After about two month’s residence with him, my life began to grow insupportably irksome: I had no society to amuse, no friend to comfort me; the image of my CLARA haunted me day and night. I at last expressed to the fisherman a wish to return to *France*; and told him that if he knew of any person going there, who would hire me as a servant, I should esteem it the greatest favor. He expressed his reluctance to part with me, but promised

to enquire. On his return home, one evening, he informed me that he knew of a carrier who was going to *Bayonne*, who wanted a mule-driver, and would be glad to accept of my services, and who would give me a crown when we arrived.

“ I set out with him, therefore, next morning, having taken leave of my benevolent fisherman, who shed tears when we parted, and filled my pockets with chesnuts, and a bottle of brandy.

“ We proceeded to *Bayonne*. It was a disagreeable journey to me, for every night was passed in scenes of riot and drunkenness, little consonant with my

state of mind. When we arrived I received my hire. That would not last long, and I had no resource; but still I was in *France*; in my dear country; the country that contained my CLARA: and as I was in the fisherman's coat, which he had changed for mine, it was impossible I should be discovered. This was some comfort.

“I resolved to beg my way as a shipwrecked sailor to *Paris*. I was about six hundred miles from it; but I thought I had more chance of hearing of CLARA there, than any where else. Besides, I knew I should find C—— there.

“Accordingly I proceeded in the direct road, and sometimes found it

hard enough to procure one meal a day. I will not paint to you the horrors of beggary, that state of humiliating wretchedness, where every insult must be endured, and where the deserving often pay for the crimes of the impostor. In some of the large towns on the road I hired myself to carry burdens, or go messages, for a few days ; but as I was anxious to arrive at *Paris*, I could not stay long enough to procure money to carry me any distance.

“ At last, however, I reached *Paris* ; and the very night of my arrival there, I was taken up as a sturdy beggar, thrown into *Bicêtre*, and condemned to hard labour, by an inhuman law, which like most others in society, finds it easier to

commit a crime, to correct an abuse, than to root it out.

“This was the most dreadful period of my sufferings. I was no longer borne up by hope, and my anxiety became insupportable. The cruelty of the scenes I witnessed wrung my heart, and made me blush for human nature.

“When I had remained for some weeks in this den of wretchedness, it was visited by the amiable DUKE DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULT, who came there frequently to chuse objects for his enlightened benevolence ; and to do all in his power to relieve those who had been unjustly shut up there ; for he,

and his friends the philosophers, make it their constant employment to alleviate the misfortunes occasioned by the crimes of government, since they cannot prevent them.

“ He questioned me among the rest. I told him that I was a shipwrecked sailor, who had lost every thing ; and who had been forced to beg my way to *Paris*, that my name was MONT-JOCE ; and that, before I went to sea, I had often received favors from the MARQUIS OF C——, who would answer for my character.

“ The moment he heard his name, I saw by his countenance that he knew part of my history. I have often heard

my friend speak of you, said he ; and I am sure you are an honest man.

“ He promised to speak to the police-officers, and to obtain my enlargement. Accordingly that night I was liberated, and conducted to the house of my deliverer, where I met with my friend C——, and returned home with him.

“ Every attention that the most delicate and refined sensibility, and friendship, could dictate, was paid to me. My misfortunes alone would have endeared me to his virtuous soul, but as the victim of superstition and despotism, I was doubly dear to him.

“ I learned from him that he had

never received my letter; that he had never heard of me since we parted; that he had only heard of a novice's escape; and that he had concluded we had both gone to *America*, without running the risk of writing to any one.

“He was shocked to hear of CLARA'S being retaken; and the more so, as he seemed absolutely to despair of my being able to recover her by any means, or even to get intelligence of her.

“When my health and strength were tolerably recovered, however, I set out on my search; and after having vainly made enquiries at several convents, I received a letter from my friend, informing me that he had intelligence

that CLARA had been carried to *Scellières*; but that he could not learn whether she was still there or not. I went, therefore, to *Scellières*, and got myself admitted as a lay-brother among the monks, that I might get into their confidence, and learn the history of the novice. Alas! I could hear nothing but vague and contradictory reports, which only bewildered and tortured my mind; and the meanness, hypocrisy, and vices of the monks, disgusted me so much, that as I could get no satisfactory information, I soon left them.

“ I still, however, lingered about the environs of *Scellières*, in different disguises, in hopes of getting some intelligence or other. In one of these I

assumed that of a Savoyard, bearing about a small packet of little trifles, which I carried to the convent. Good God! what were my sensations when I approached it! At the outer gate I met the tourrière who had favored our escape. She did not recognize me; but by offering her some of my things for sale for little or nothing, I soon got into her good graces. I was allowed often to come to the gate, and was employed in going messages for her. She soon got so intimate with me as to entertain me with the scandalous histories of the convent; at last she came to the unfortunate history of my CLARA; my emotion betrayed me; she recognized me. I offered her money, and conjured her to tell me what had befallen her.

“She hesitated for some time; at last she told me, that when she was brought back to the convent, she was closely confined. ‘Good God!’ said I, ‘and is she still there?’ She answered me that she had been dead some time. ‘And my child!’—‘The child was dead born,’ said she; ‘and she died in labour.’

“This she told me with the most unfeeling coldness; and warned me never again to come near the nunnery.

“She had no need: I flew from a place where my wife had been murdered (though, after all, I had in some measure murdered her myself), and

returned to *Paris*; where, after some months, by the consolations of my friends, I had recovered sufficient tranquillity to be able to write in journals, and the new Encyclopedia; and I am at last independent.

“ It is now two years since I learned my CLARA’s death; and each summer since, I have spent a few weeks in this neighbourhood, where at first I could not live. Though there are some moments when my grief is too much for me; yet, in general, I have reconciled myself so much to my situation, as to be able to think of my CLARA with a melancholy pleasure, and to rejoice that she is now no longer suffering in this wicked world.

“ I can even sometimes rouse my mind from a selfish apathy by the pleasures of study, and beneficence, and I have often experienced the truth of CONDORCET’s remark in his life of VOLTAIRE, “ that the power of abstract-
“ ing the mind from suffering, is a
“ preeious gift, which must not be
“ calumniated, by being confounded
“ with insensibility.”

“ I have not yet quite become a misanthrope; and though I have suffered much from the wickedness of mankind, I still pity individuals.”

ANGELICA was so much affected by this story, that it was some time before she could collect resolution enough to

“speak a word to him. At length she said, “Heavens! what a world! how you have suffered!”

“I am glad my child never saw it,” said he.

As he said this he rose up, and telling ANGELICA that it was late, they walked slowly together from the convent.

“You do not now wonder,” said he, “that I have so strongly advised you never to enter a convent.”

“I never had the least inclination,” said she, “and none can have, who are not misled and mistaught from their infancy; at least I thought so. But I

have a friend who received her education in the world, and whom I thought as much averse to these dens of crime and misery as myself; yet, during a short absence from me, while she was boarded in this convent, she has taken the veil: I fear she will repent it; and at any rate I have lost my friend. For if she is become superstitious enough to have taken the veil, her heart will be shut to every other sentiment."

"Was she not superstitious when you left her?"

"Not the least."

"Had she no unfortunate attachment?"

“ I am certain that she had not.”

“ Then depend upon it, my child, she has been deceived, either by her interested relations, or the wicked Abbess. I cannot think she is become so religious all of a sudden; though there is no saying, these creatures are so very artful; they may have frightened her. Besides your friend is young, is she not?”

“ About sixteen.”

“ Have you seen her often since her profession?”

“ Never but once. I did not know what to say to her: I felt myself em-

barrassed in her company ; I was afraid of shocking her feelings, or not being able to dissemble my own principles. I considered her vows as an insurmountable barrier between us."

" I think you are wrong in that respect, my dear. Whatever be her motive for entering the convent, you must consider her unfortunate, and endeavour to console her. It is almost certain she will need consolation. From what you have said to me she is not one of those stupid, bigotted young people, with whom convents are filled. The state of a nun will grow irksome to her : and even should this not be the case, your neglect alone, will be sufficient to make her unfortunate."

“ I thank you for this observation. I now see differently, and will visit her to-morrow, and if you will permit me, I will give you an account of our conversation in the evening.”

“ Your confidence will at all times afford me pleasure, my dear child ; and if I can be of any service to you, or your friend, this pleasure will be doubled.”

CHAP. IV.

NEXT day ANGELICA went to the convent. She found EUGENIA melancholy, reserved, and even cold. She was not surprised at it; she even excused her, and blamed herself alone.

After the conversation had been general for some time: "I perceive," said ANGELICA, "that you are under

constraint with me. I know what it is; you are offended at my long absence."

"Have not I reason? But I beg your pardon: it is very natural for one in the world to forget a recluse. I am forgotten by every one on earth; by my father; but I did not expect it from you."

"Ah! my dear EUGENIA, what injustice you do me! I forget you! I never thought more of you than during this last fortnight. But I confess you have a right to be offended at my long absence, and I promise never again to repeat the offence."

"Account for it then."

“To own the truth to you, I thought our last conversation was disagreeable to you.”

“’Tis true, I will never expose myself to hear such another. Doubt is a torment in my situation; besides, it is impious; it is blasphemous. I am unhappy enough in this world, and I am resolved not to be so in the next by my fault, if I can help it.”

“I would not contribute to your unhappiness, any where, for the universe: but you are then unhappy here!”

“No; who told you so?”

“You, yourself, but now.”

“ I did not:—if I did, it escaped me.”

“ Then you constrain yourself with me, EUGENIA. Trust me with the cause of your distress, and perhaps I may comfort you; at least, I shall attempt it. Do not punish me so severely for my long absence, as to deprive me of your confidence.”

EUGENIA burst into tears. These were the first words of kindness she had heard since she last saw ANGELICA. The Abbess had now no more reason to court her: indeed, her attentions had diminished ever since she was certain that EUGENIA was to take the veil, and that she was not affluent. She

began to treat her with indifference, and even with something more; for she perceived that EUGENIA was a girl of penetration, and might see through the thin veil of hypocrisy, with which she had covered her vices.

“ I thought all the world had become indifferent to me,” said EUGENIA, still weeping.

“ Ah! my friend, how much you are mistaken! There is nothing I would not do to alleviate your distress; and whether you confide it to me or not, I shall still shew you all the friendship that is in my power. But there is another thing, with regard to which I must undeceive you. You seem to think

that your father is indifferent to you, that your eternal separation made no impression on him; now I can assure you, that the idea of your going into the convent distressed him exceedingly. Not that I mean to excuse him: he should not have sent you from him to gratify the malice of your step-mother; he should not have punished you for her crimes; above all, he should not have sent you to a convent. But when he wished in some measure to atone for this, by procuring you a brilliant establishment, why did you refuse it?"

"I refuse it! an establishment! my father propose one for me! It is you who are deceived: nothing of all this is the case. On the contrary, my father

could not afford to give me any thing; it is even with difficulty he can pay my portion here. This I know too well, and it is for this I am a nun."

"O God! who told you so? Did your infamous step-mother dare to write you this?"

"Why do you call her infamous? It is true she has been unjust to me: but is it right to speak against our enemies? is it not our duty to forgive, nay to love them?"

"What! can it be our duty to love wickedness at any time; and to forgive it, because we have suffered by it? If you knew of her what I do, you would

agree with me. But was it from her you had this intelligence?"

"No, it was from your mother."

"My mother, how can this be? She never told me a word of it."

"I begged she would not."

"And why EUGENIA?"

"Because I knew your generosity, my friend; and I was afraid that you would offer to share your fortune with me, to prevent me from taking the veil."

"And why was you afraid of it? Why did you refuse to make me happy?"

O EUGENIA ! how you have distressed me ! What a false delicacy ! You know my fortune would have been more than ample for us both."

" Console yourself, my dear friend, you could not have disposed of it, you are under age."

" But I could have prevailed upon my mother to invite you to live with us. O EUGENIA ! this was cruel of you ! Had I known this three weeks sooner !"

" Had I known what you have told me three weeks sooner, I should not have been here. But from whom had you your information ?"

“From your father himself, he even shewed me the letter he had received from the gentleman, who asked you in marriage. If I had known that you had been ignorant of this, I never should have told you.”

“I wish you had not; but repentance is now too late: we must submit to a fate which is irrevocable; especially when we ourselves have chosen that fate.”

“You are then very unhappy here my dear friend?”

“I tried to persuade myself I was not. The idea that I had made a generous sacrifice to my father, supported

me: but that idea no longer subsists; and I don't know what will become of me."

"Then your vocation was a fiction, to deceive me?"

"It was to deceive myself. I don't know what to think; I am tormented by doubts.—But I hear the bell for evening prayers. Farewell; do not be long before you return to me: I want your friendship, and support."

In the evening ANGELICA, as she had promised, met VLENCE, and told him of the conversation she had had with her friend. He was shocked to learn she had been so deceived, but

advised ANGELICA to continue her visits, and told her that it was doubly her duty to comfort her, as it had been by her means that she had learnt the fatal truth; “for it is error alone that consoles in convents,” said he, “which are only founded upon errors and vices of the worst kind.”

“But would not truth afford her greater consolation if she knew it entirely?”

“Without doubt, if she could make her escape; but if not, it would only add to her torments.”

“Alas!” said ANGELICA, “escape is now impossible; she has taken her

vows, those irrevocable vows that doom her for ever to wretchedness."

"It is not that idea, that would prevent me; were I sure of being able to assist her in making her escape, and providing for her security afterwards; I would not hesitate a moment in making her a convert to the propriety of the step, and to the cause of truth."

"But is it consistent with morality, to break a solemn promise, though even contrary to our interest."

"Certainly not, if the happiness of another depends upon that promise. But your friend has promised away her liberty, at an age when she is incapable

of judging of its value; and at no age, strictly speaking, could she have a right to do so. The vow of obedience she has taken to her superior alone, who may lead her to error and crime, is sufficient to prove this. ROUSSEAU told a great truth, when he said, that no person had a right to sell himself for a slave, because then he sold himself to commit every crime, to obey the commands of his master. Now your friend is a slave in the strictest sense of the word. Tell me, ANGELICA, would you think you had done wrong in assisting a negro to escape?"

"No, certainly."

"Yet, according to your argument,

he would be breaking his contract: and there is even more to be said against this, than against the escape of a nun; for he is, in some respects, his master's property."

"But he had no right to acquire that property."

"You have answered yourself: he certainly had not. Now whose property are nuns? To whom have they made their vows? For whose advantage is it that they should be kept? Not that of the state, for these institutions deprive it of inhabitants: not for the benefit of morality, for they violate its first duties, by secluding themselves from society; and nature consequently avenges herself

by making these places the receptacle of every vice. You can form no idea of the crimes that are perpetrated in convents. Then it is only for the advantage of the church, that is to say of the class of the oppressors."

"You have perfectly convinced me. Even the partisans of religion cannot say that convents answer any other end than to render it odious and ridiculous. How could it ever be imagined that the SUPREME BEING could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures?"

"We can form no idea of the SUPREME BEING but by the general laws of morality, which we feel in our own hearts; and, as VOLTAIRE says,

‘Their power is sure, their principle
‘divine.’ As to the justice of instituting
convents, that will not bear an argu-
ment; and I have only entered into
this discussion to prove to you, that an
unjust promise can never be binding,
and that the error was in making it.—
Of such promises the greatest poet and
moralist says, they are ‘more honored
‘in the breach, than the observance.’

“You have given me the strongest
desire to make EUGENIA break her
vows.”

“But you must be cautious, my
child; do not shock her at first: sound
her by degrees; for if you do not suc-
ceed, you will throw her into doubt,

and make her more miserable than she is already."

"I shall be guided entirely by your counsel; depend upon it, I shall precipitate nothing."

Before they parted, VOLENCE asked ANGELICA, why she seemed startled at the name of VILLEFRANCHE, when he was relating his history; and how she had got acquainted with him. She told him that she had seen him often at MADAME DE BLEVILLE's; that he was the most amiable young man she had ever met with; and that she had imagined—— "but things in this world" said she, "seldom meet our wishes."

“Then he was attached to you? I hope you do not think mine an idle curiosity.”

“After the confidence you have reposed in me,” said ANGELICA, “it would be most ungrateful of me to refuse you mine in return. I will confess then that I think he was attached to me; and that had my aunt lived, this attachment might perhaps have improved: but he was called into the country by his father; and when he returns to town he will no longer find me there. Indeed this was one of my mother’s principal reasons for retiring to the country.”

“What objection can she have to such a connection?”

“ His principles, which are well known in the world; and his father objects to mine, at least to those of my aunt, by whom I was brought up.”

“ Heavens!” said VOLENCE, “ how mankind persist in tormenting themselves! Are they not sufficiently thwarted by nature? will they never know their rights, nor their duties. But VILLEFRANCHE’s father will not be able to prevent his marriage with you: his son is considerably more than of age. Your mother I think might be easily persuaded. But are you well acquainted, my child, with VILLEFRANCHE’s character?”

“ As well as with my own.”

“ Do you think you could pass your life with him?”

“ I flatter myself that ours is an attachment that would encrease; it is founded upon mutual esteem. It is not a fever of the imagination, but an affection of the heart; it is built upon the mutual knowledge of our characters; and upon the agreement of our sentiments. His principles are pure, without being rigid; he is brave, generous, beneficent, sincere, and enlightened; in short, he is one of those characters that are only to be met with in this age, and in this country: and my attachment to him is what D’ALEMBERT calls the perfection and completement of friendship. But on the subject of love,”

says ANGELICA, presenting him with a manuscript, "this speaks my sentiments better than I at present know how to do; exercise your mercy for I am a young poet."

S O N N E T,

On the compatibility of Love and Wisdom.

To sensual fools, think not almighty LOVE
 Bestows the relish of his heavenly joys :
 No!—his high gifts unconscious of alloys,
 The reach of little minds is far above,
 And only noble souls can his enjoyments prove :
 Such dignify their playfulness and toys ;
 Such know the springs of vast delight to move,
 For KNOWLEDGE in her train the GRACES best
 employs.

With tenderness MINERVA's heart to inspire,
 REASON to bind in chains of choicest flowers ;
 To give to VIRTUE, PLEASURE's keenest fire ;
 To bid bright GENIUS lead the polish'd hours,
 Is all immortal WISDOM can desire ;
 And these are best attain'd by LOVE's delicious
 powers!

“ You must be united, my dear child, you are worthy of such a husband. It will be some consolation to me to see the brother of my CLARA united to one so like her. Do you ever hear from him?”

“ I have not since I came to the country. When I do you may depend upon it that, in my answer, I shall mention you : but I have given him no address here. You know that letters by the post are not safe in this country. He used to send them to me under cover to a friend, whose address was respected : and as our correspondence generally turned upon dangerous truths, I would not expose him to commit himself.”

“Then he has never directly proposed marriage to you?”

“Never directly, but I think it is almost mutually understood; and had we been a fortnight longer together in town, it would certainly have been finally settled.”

“You will surely see him soon. I am quite impatient for this being concluded. I am sure you are not happy at home.”

“It would be affectation to say I am. My mother’s opinions and character, and mine, are so opposite, that it is impossible I can be so.”

“ I shall be obliged to go to *Paris* in a few days. If *VILLEFRANCHE* is in town, I shall certainly see him; and you may depend upon it, I shall bring you a letter from him.”

“ Then you shall carry one from me, for I have no idea of that affectation that would conceal from a man the affection that a woman feels for him. Women are not sufficiently aware that when they pursue this conduct, it is confessing that they think there is something shameful in the attachment, or that they are afraid the man may think so.”

“ In the present state of society, my child, they have too much reason for

this. The social institutions of our day, though they have not been able to suppress nature (notwithstanding they have done all in their power for that purpose) have succeeded in warping it, and as the christian morality is founded principally upon purity of manners, which it is much easier to speak about, than practise, men have taken the practise of the world for the rule of their conduct, and the theory of the preachers for that of their wives, and daughters. But till theory and practise, are the same for both sexes, purity of manners will never exist for either. Indeed, as CONDORCET remarks in his life of TURGOT, for 'want of good laws, purity of manners has ever been 'but a chimera, in any country; and

‘till we have good general laws, it never
‘will be any thing else.’ For instance,
so long as marriage is made a religious
and eternal engagement, how can
domestic happiness be secured?”

“But were it managed otherwise,
would it not throw society into con-
fusion? Were I married to VILLE-
FRANCHE I should never wish to
separate from him.”

“Would the liberty of separation
make it more common among those
who would otherwise live together hap-
pily? Besides, my child, there are few
attachments founded upon principles
like your’s: they are often founded
upon transient passions; and when the

two unfortunate beings who have thus inconsiderately joined their fate together, come to their senses, they find that they have only joined their misery or ennui. Passion prevented them from seeing this at first, and a new passion will in a like manner hurry them on to violate their marriage vows, till from one step to another, the corruption of manners will become general. And what sort of an education will two such beings give to their children, should they have the misfortune to have any! The extreme corruption existing in this country in particular, may be easily accounted for: for as the opinion of either of the young people is scarcely ever asked, and the marriages are made up entirely according to family convenience, both

parties, as VOLTAIRE says, ‘repent of
‘the bargain as soon as it is made;’ but
in vain : you know no divorce can be
obtained upon any account. Marriage
is a *holy rite*, an *indefeasible sacrament*.^{*} Thus we see that all vices may
be traced up to some general error, in
the construction of the laws of society.”

In this manner VOLENCE and ANGELICA passed many evenings together, in instructive conversation; and when he went to town ANGELICA felt the loss of his society extremely. He would have asked her to write to him, particularly concerning EUGENIA, but this was too important a subject to trust by post.

ANGELICA went often to the convent.

EUGENIA's doubts and ennui daily increased. The performance of her religious duties became extremely irksome to her; she had become melancholy: this was perceived; and she was tormented with lectures, and reproaches. ADELA was almost constantly in her cell, and reported every thing to her aunt concerning EUGENIA's behaviour, more from weakness than wickedness. She often accompanied her to the parlour when she met ANGELICA, and constrained them extremely. At last the Abbess told EUGENIA, that she spent too much of her time in worldly conversation, and that she would not permit ANGELICA to visit her more than once a week, especially so near the feast of Pentecost.

This constraint only made EUGENIA's situation the more insupportable, and hastened what the Abbess wished to prevent.

ANGELICA felt the separation almost as much as EUGENIA. VOLENCE was not at home; it was long since she had heard from VILLEFRANCHE, and she dared not to speak of him. She employed herself in study, acts of beneficence, and walking.

In her rambles she enquired for objects of distress, went into their houses, saw their situation herself, and carried them cloaths, provisions, cordials, or money, as she thought they required them. This employed her

time usefully and delightfully. She often compared the pleasures of beneficence with the ennui of the convent; and thought how her friend EUGENIA would envy her. She often reflected too on the absurdity of those, who suppose that supernatural motives were requisite to induce men to perform beneficent actions; and pitied those, from her soul, who did not find themselves sufficiently recompensed by the pleasure of performing them; she neither boasted of, nor concealed these actions: she did not think herself better than others, but better informed. She thought she was performing an act of strict justice, not of generosity: and every reflecting mind must be sensible that it is a duty to lessen as much as

possible the ill effects of the inequality of fortune, which bad laws, and corrupt institutions, have introduced.

In one of her visits to the cottages, she was addressed by a poor woman who had a large family of eight young children, whose husband was a day labourer in a neighbouring farm, and who could hardly support one half of such a family, upon the small wages he received. She was holding a most beautiful girl, about two years old, by the hand, scarcely covered by a few rags, but they were clean. "What a charming child!" said ANGELICA, "is it your youngest?"

"It is not mine," said the woman:
"I have eight beside her."

“ Whose is it then.”

“ Come this way lady, and I will tell you how I came by it. About two years ago, as I was going towards the garden of *Scellières*, where I sometimes weed, at the outside of the wall, among the long grass, I found a child lying quite naked, and apparently newly born. I took it up, wrapped it in my apron, and knocking at the door of the convent, begged the *tourrière*, to ask the Abbess if she would take charge of a poor little infant I had found exposed.

“ She answered she would take no such message; that the Abbess would not receive the child of guilt; that her house was the asylum of the virtuous.

But this poor little thing is innocent, said I; she cannot help her birth. Go, said she, it is the bastard of some of your friends you wish to impose upon us, or perhaps your own; for what I know? Take it away.

“ I then addressed myself to the curate of the parish. I have more poor, said he, than I can support; the funds are not near equal to the expences. The church will never encourage crimes. Since you have taken it up you had better carry it to the Foundling Hospital, at *Paris*; not that I approve of that institution either.

“ I was very angry, Mademoiselle, for I knew that there was a young lady

staid with our curate, whom he called his niece. Lord knows whether it be true, or not, but it is generally believed that she had a child by him, whom he brings up under the name of her younger sister."

"Did no one then give you any assistance for this poor child?" said ANGELICA.

"No," said the woman, "but for all that, I could not bring myself to part with it, it was so pretty; and as I was nursing myself, I thought I might easily keep it, at least till it was weaned; and that the LORD would reward me for it. My husband, who is a good natured man, had no objection to it, so you see

it is still with me: but in these hard times it is difficult for me to know how to keep it much longer."

"Will you give it to me?" said ANGELICA.

"With all my heart," said the woman. "It will be doing me a great favor as well as the child. Will you really be so good?"

"Have not you already set me the example? You are poor, I am rich; your actions was much more generous than mine."

"I should have been as bad as a murderer;" said the woman, "If I had

cast it out. It is a sweet child; but though I love it very much, I should wrong its interest, in refusing it to you. It will be better fed, cloathed, and taught with you, than it can be with me. and you are so good that I am sure you will be kind to it."

"Will you go home with me, my dear?" said ANGELICA to the child, taking it up and kissing it.

"With all my heart," said she.

ANGELICA gave the woman some money, and promised to look after her family, from time to time. "You see," said she, "a good action never goes

unrewarded, even in this world. What is the child's name?"

"I called it MARY, Mademoiselle, for I took it up on St. Mary's day."

As ANGELICA went home the child cried a little, at being separated from its mother, as it had been taught to call her. ANGELICA however soon consoled her, and carried her home, where her mother read her a long lecture upon the imprudence and impropriety of taking charge of an unknown child, low-born, and ill-bred. ANGELICA, however, soothed her parent as much as she could, dressed the child in some cloaths she happened to have ready made, and brought her to her.

“It is very pretty, to be sure,” said MADAME DE FERVAC; and as I have already said, that she was more weak, than wicked; and more peevish than tyrannical, she said no more about it; and ANGELICA was allowed to keep MARY.

She had never before been so happy; she had attained her two favorite objects, relieving the unfortunate, and taking charge of an education. She could not sleep, she laid plans all night for its future progress, and promised herself not to allow its mind to be warped by early prejudices. She thought that she should probably soon see VILLEFRANCHE; and that if they were married, how happy he would be to

adopt it. Next day she carried it to the convent to shew it to EUGENIA.

EUGENIA was delighted with it. "Ah my dear friend," said she, "of how much more use you are in society than I am !"

"Console yourself, my dear EUGENIA; you have been unfortunate, not criminal."

"I am unfortunate indeed; I am overwhelmed with despair, ennui, and chagrin."

"But you should employ yourself in works of charity, my dear friend; that part of morality at least is not

prohibited in this house. Besides you might read."

"I have no books but books of devotion; and I am obliged to read enough of them. If you could bring me what are here called profane works, to read by stealth, I should be infinitely obliged to you. Our Superior is going from home next week for some spiritual business, she says, and for her niece, our spy, ADELA's health. She is to leave the convent in charge to the oldest nun, her favorite, who is a downright idiot, and will do any thing in the world for some pounds of sugar, coffee, or snuff. Only you must take care to conceal the books, for if any of the other nuns were to see them they

would inform our confessor, and we should be ruined."

ANGELICA promised to be careful, and was overjoyed to hear that the Abbess was to leave home. The spiritual business that required her absence was, in fact, one of a far different nature, that took place pretty frequently between her and her confessor; the consequences of which it became necessary to conceal from the convent.

This absence of the Abbess afforded ANGELICA an excellent opportunity for the prosecution of her schemes upon EUGENIA.

As she was returning home from the

convent that evening, she observed a post-chaise at a distance, coming towards her mother's house. She thought she saw two gentlemen in it, and upon its nearer approach perceived them to be **VOLENCE** and **VILLEFRANCHE**. On seeing her they instantly stopped the carriage, and both jumped out.

The meeting between **ANGELICA** and **VILLEFRANCHE** was most tender and endearing. **VOLENCE** was affected. They walked on for some time together. **VILLEFRANCHE** spoke to **ANGELICA** of his anxiety to see her, his impatience to hear from her, and his joy on receiving her letter ; of his grief for the loss of her aunt ; his happiness on meeting again with **VOLENCE** ; and

in short, of every thing that mutually concerned them.

He took notice of the child, and ANGELICA related its history. He embraced it with tenderness, and seemed already to have adopted it in his heart. VOLENCE looked at it with attention, and said with a sigh, “had the child of my unfortunate CLARA still lived, it would have been about that age.”—VILLEFRANCHE and ANGELICA wept with him. They wished him to come to the house of MADAME DE FERVAC; this he declined, saying he would rather indulge his feelings in solitude; and retired to his cottage.

The reception MADAME DE FERVAC

gave **VILLEFRANCHE** was far from being favorable; but as he was of a good family, and possessed of a large fortune, she did not treat him absolutely ill.

Next morning **ANGELICA** and he rose early, and took a long walk, at the close of which every thing was settled. **ANGELICA** spoke to him with the same ingenuousness with which she had spoken of him to **VOLENCE**; and he left it to her to obtain her mother's consent; or rather, to inform her of their intended marriage, as soon as possible. It was agreed that he should return that day to *Paris* to inform his father of it, and arrange his affairs, so as to be able to take a house in *Swit-*

zerland, whither he meant to carry his bride, that they might enjoy more liberty than they could at that time in *France*. He told her that he had invited VOLLENCE to reside with them, and that he was in hopes to prevail with him. She, in her turn, recited to him the history of EUGENIA; and communicated to him the strong desire she had to favor her escape. VILLEFRANCHE entered into her design with ardor; and entreated her to employ every means to secure both her conversion and liberation before his return, which was to be in about a month.

They then returned home, and breakfasted with MADAME DE FERVAC, after which he took leave, and left

ANGELICA to negotiate the business by herself, as he was sensible that his presence would irritate, and be far from conciliating her mother.

“What a pity,” said MADAME DE FERVAC, as he shut the door, “that that young man’s principles are so bad! His address is so agreeable, and his manners so genteel, that one can hardly help liking him; but one has to recollect every moment, and guard oneself against him.”

“In what respect are his principles bad, pray Madam?”

“In what respect! in every respect: with regard to religion, and politics,

they are sufficiently known. His father himself has told me a thousand times how he lamented it."

"His father, you know my dear mother, is not famous for candour and probity, or adhering to truth when his interest is concerned. His son was odious to him from his earliest years, because he inherited a large fortune from his mother, independent of him."

"Was it a large fortune?"

"I believe very considerable; I have heard it called 50,000 livres a year."

"That is very considerable indeed. It is true, his father is a very severe

man: you know he forced his daughter into a convent to prevent her marriage with a man of family and fortune, merely because his principles were suspected; though, after all, she in some measure justified his severity, by running away from her convent with an adventurer, the day before she was to have taken her vows. She was, however, afterwards retaken, and died in the convent."

"I know her unfortunate story but too well. I have often heard her brother speak of her with regret. But I think it is more than probable that she escaped with the man to whom she was engaged."

“ And even though this were the case, do you make so light of parental authority as to excuse her conduct?”

“ It would certainly be more excusable than if she had run off with a stranger.”

“ That is true; but indeed your principles are a great deal too free on these subjects: however, that is MADAME DE BLEVILLE’S fault.”

“ I must entreat you, mother, not to say any thing against her: you know I cannot bear that. What did you ever see either in her conduct, or mine, to make you think her principles too free on any subject?”

“ I did not mean to find fault with either her conduct, or yours, my child. Indeed I think you are uncommonly correct ; and if you are not devout enough that is not so much your fault as that of the age ; but your practice in every other respect is unexceptionable. Every girl cannot be a nun : I confess I am anxious to see you well married in the world : and there is no husband I would sooner chuse for you than VILLEFRANCHE, were his principles better.”

“ His principles again !” said ANGELICA. “ Pray tell me what are those dreadful principles which alarm you so much ?”

I know nothing of them, my child, but from hearsay."

"But if hearsay were listened to, who would escape reproach? Have you not often heard his conduct praised, and sometimes even ridiculed for being too strict on some points, where it is thought as honorable for young men to err, as dishonorable for women?"

"Come, come, my child, confess the truth; you love him! Has he ever made proposals to you?"

"I will not deny it, and I should have told you so at first, without any circumlocution had I not been afraid of

your aversion to these supposed principles of his."

"You should have told me this, indeed so should he. Was not I the person to be informed first on such an occasion?"

"Certainly, after me. But you know he is not personally acquainted with you; and as you had always treated him with reserve, he desired me to inform you of his proposals, and my consent."

"This should have been managed otherwise. But this is MADAME DE BLEVILLE's fault again. However as such offers are not made every day, and

as his fortune and family are good, I will consider of it."

"Dear mother, I have considered of it already; I have known him long, and I am certain he will make me happy."

After some more altercation, on the subject, MADAME DE FERVAC gave her consent. Fortunately for her daughter, she had resolved not to mention it to her sister, the ABBESS OF SCCELLIERES, because she knew that she had a rooted hatred to the family of VILLEFRANCHE; and as she knew that her own mind was weak, she did not wish to run the risk of not being able to support an argument upon the subject.

Upon the whole she was pleased with ANGELICA's marriage, because it was a brilliant establishment; and she could not feel much regret at parting with a daughter with whom she had scarcely ever lived, and whose disposition was so completely different from her own.

ANGELICA wrote to inform VILLEFRANCHE of the success of her negotiation, and to hasten his return as much as possible. She was sincerely congratulated by VOLENCE, who, since her marriage was determined on, began to be sensible of feeling returning interest in the happiness of some human beings.

On the day the Abbess was to leave

the convent, ANGELICA went there to inform her friend of her intended marriage; not forgetting to carry her the books she had requested. She had consulted VOLENCE on the choice; he recommended some of VOLTAIRE's tragedies, such as *Zara*, *Alzira*, and *Mahomet*, his *Philosophy of History*, and his poem on *Natural Law*, to begin the work of her conversion, and to free her mind from the grossest prejudices.

EUGENIA received the intelligence of her friend's marriage with a mixed sensation. "Then I must lose you," said she, "but I will try not to be so selfish as to regret it. You will be happy; you deserve to be so; but I never can."

“ Take courage, my dear friend, happiness is never to be secured by despair. Exert yourself, enlighten your mind, free it from prejudice.”

“ I can never free my person, I am a slave in the worst sense of the word : I have given myself eternal chains. These gates are like the gates of death ; they are never again to be repassed.”

“ Perhaps the state may yet open them : every thing announces an approaching revolution : all will soon be changed.”

“ Nothing can change my vows.”

ANGELICA, mindful of VOLENCE'S

advice, proceeded no farther for the present, and promising to see her as often as she could before the return of VILLEFRANCHE, left the books with her, and returned home.

As ANGELICA's marriage drew near, EUGENIA every day grew more melancholy. ANGELICA observed with regret, that her reading had filled her mind with doubts, and uneasiness.

“How do you like the books I have given you?” said ANGELICA to her one day.

“I have read them with pleasure; but they have distressed me.”

“Why have they distressed you, my friend?”

“Because they have inspired me with doubts concerning the necessity of the belief of my religion, to exclusive salvation.”

“But why exclusive? Would it distress you to allow that more people were saved, beside your sect?”

“No; but then I need not have sacrificed so much, to have obtained salvation. This is my opinion sometimes; and at other times I think it is a crime to doubt. ‘If God has spoke, I surely must obey,’ says PALMIRA.”

“ Without doubt; and nobody in the world was ever so mad as to maintain, that the orders of a BEING, who created, and preserved us (when recognized for such) were to be disobeyed. It is not the orders of heaven that any one disputes, the only question is whether they came from thence. I know the priests of all religions have affected to consider those who doubt, as impious and presumptuous. But the philosophers have never said: let us not obey GOD: but, let us examine whether the priests have not fabricated these orders.”

“And is it your opinion that they have?”

“ Most certainly it is: how does it appear to you that they have not?”

“The history of our religion appears so authentic; it has had so many martyrs; so many nations have believed in the essential parts of it, though they have differed in some particulars, that I can hardly persuade myself so many people have been deceived. Those who have doubted of it are but as a drop in the bucket, in comparison to those who still believe in it.”

“This is but too true; but this only proves that there are more fools in the world than sensible people.”

“So you consider all as fools who are not of your opinion!”

“I beg your pardon, I spoke too

warmly. Argument should be the only arms of truth. But what do you mean by my opinion? What opinion have I advanced but that improbabilities and impossibilities will always be such, though they should be adopted, and adored by the world at large?"

"But you have not yet attempted to prove to me that those things which I have been taught and accustomed to believe, are either impossible or improbable."

"Because I did not think that your understanding was one, to which it was necessary to prove, that two and three did not make four. But since you desire it, I shall enter coolly into a discussion

of these opinions ; and I shall try for a moment to forget how revolting they are to my mind, which has never been accustomed to them, in order that I may convince your's, which has been warped with them by early education. I might address to you what ZARA says of herself, only changing it a little :

‘ Had you been born upon the *Ganges*’ banks,
‘ You had believed whate’er the Bramin’s teach ;
‘ In *Turkey* you had been a Mussulman,
‘ But born in *France* you are a Christian.’

“ This is no reasoning at all. Are not all our sentiments impressed upon our minds by our parents and teachers ? ”

“ Is this all the fruit you have got from reading the Natural Law ? It is true all our sentiments are impressed by

them; but there are some which reason avows when we grow up, and others which it disavows, if we take the trouble to examine them. A celebrated author has said, that there are no religious opinions or systems of belief at which a man of eighteen would not laugh, did he then hear them for the first time. Now what man at any age would laugh, were he told for the first time that it was necessary to be just, to respect the rights of others, to do no harm to any one, and to assist the unfortunate? Were these truths ever disputed? Does not every man's conscience respect them in his cool moments, and would he ever violate them, were he not influenced by some strong passion, and did he not suppose

from a false calculation, that it was his interest to infringe the rights of others?"

"All these moral truths are strongly enforced by our religion."

"They are so by every one, as you might have seen when you read the Philosophy of History. No founder of any religion, however ridiculous, or atrocious, ever dared to attempt to subvert one of them: he would have been universally shunned. Every one therefore has been obliged to respect them, in the theory of all religions, though their practise has always corrupted, and sometimes destroyed them,

in proportion as the principles of that religion have been more or less contrary to reason. But let us descend to a particular examination of your faith."

"As to its mysteries, I will not enter into them, for I confess I never understood them. Besides, you know, we are taught that it is a crime to examine them."

"That prohibition was necessary, or they would not have lasted a generation."

"For heaven's sake, say no more to me upon this subject," said EUGENIA.

"I am already tormented sufficiently by doubt. I wish I had never listened to you; or rather I wish I were not here:

I don't know what I wish. I would rather have remained blind, if I was so, than have had my sight restored to me, to see the horrors of my prison. It was cruel of you, ANGELICA, to expatiate upon the weight of my chains, since you can never break them."

"Pardon me my friend; it was not my intention to make you wretched; and I think I could break your chains if you would give your consent."

"Never, never, impossible."

"But I am going to Switzerland. If you would make your escape you could easily go with me, and you could not be retaken."

“Impossible, I have not the power; I dare not have the will. My vows are sacred; though they were surprized from me; though I was deceived into them; though I was young, thoughtless, and precipitate, yet, they are made, and must exist for ever. And as Alzira says, ‘—— J’ai promis, n’importe à quel Dieu.’* In short, I will not hear another word upon the subject. Farewell, be happy, and leave me to my misery and my misfortune.”

“Will you not allow me to see you again once more before I go, to bid you farewell, and ask your pardon for having, without intention, distressed you so much. Will you not reflect once

* I’ve promised, ’tis indifferent to what God.

more upon the proposition I have made to you?"

"I shall certainly see you again."

Saying this EUGENIA retired to her cell, and left ANGELICA much distressed, not only in having failed in her enterprise to prevail on EUGENIA to attempt her escape, but in having made her still more unfortunate, than she was before she spoke to her.

She communicated her vexation to VOLENCE, who sympathized with her: and as he was going to *Paris* the next day, to settle his affairs, that he might be able to accompany ANGELICA and her husband to *Switzerland*, it was

agreed that she should write by him to VILLEFRANCHE, to inform him of the bad success of their undertaking. Accordingly that night, before she went to bed, she wrote the following letter.

CHAP. V.



TO M. DE VILLEFRANCHE.

Scellières.

I AM sure you will be as much distressed as I am, my dearest friend, to learn that all my attempts for the conversion and deliverance of EUGENIA, have been fruitless ; and what is more, I fear I have made her more unhappy than she was. Is it possible that with the purest intentions one may feel remorse? yet I

cannot defend myself from this painful emotion, though I am sensible I have said or done nothing but what I intended should contribute to her happiness. I cannot help a thousand times repeating to myself that line of *Tancred*, 'Moi des remords! qui! moi! Le crime seul les donne?'^{*} Yet I have committed none. Can it be a crime to wish to free a friend from error? I am sure it cannot. Yet I am uneasy, very uneasy: my mind will not be tranquillized till I hear from you. I know there are some times when we ought not to depend on our own conscience alone, but should call in the opinion of enlightened and virtuous men to support and direct us:

^{*} I feel remorse! It is to crimes alone,
That such a dreadful feeling is attached.

and when this enlightened and virtuous man is a friend, and the dearest friend, his opinion becomes invaluable.

When shall I be so happy as to have you with me constantly to direct me? When will my happiness begin? I am growing very impatient for your return. If you or **VOLENCE** are not coming this week, pray write to me by **LOUIS**, and tell me what course I am to pursue with regard to **EUGENIA**; for this state of mind is insupportable. I need not add that I am, and ever will be,

Your unalterably attached,

and affectionate friend,

GABRIELLA ANGELICA DE FERVAC.

I had almost signed **VILLEFRANCHE.**

Three days after, she received the following answer from VILLEFRANCHE, by LOUIS, as she desired.

TO MADEMOISELLE DE FERVAC.

Paris.

My dearest ANGELICA, my amiable and virtuous friend, I am sorry that the pleasure of writing to you should be clouded by the idea that you have been so unhappy for three days past, as your letter seems to shew. You have no reason to reproach yourself, my love, for feelings which a heart like your's is only capable of experiencing: I know they are painful; but trust me, they are ill-founded. Your conduct has been influenced by the purest friendship,

and a zeal for truth. You have endeavoured to secure the happiness of your friend, and promote the cause of virtue: your intentions were pure, the means you employed lawful; and though you have unfortunately been disappointed in your virtuous endeavours, this is the fault of superstition and prejudice, and not your's. How pernicious are their baneful effects, since endeavouring to remove them can even occasion a moment of remorse to the virtuous! I shudder when I think what shocks the world must undergo, before the understanding of mankind can be rectified with regard to their moral and political interest. How many crimes will be perpetrated! And these crimes will be attributed to the virtuous! But they

must not blame themselves : these crimes must be added to the long list, superstition and tyranny have already to answer for.

Try to prevail with EUGENIA once more ; but do not force her inclination. She will be more unhappy out of the convent than in it, if she is not convinced that she had a right to leave it. I leave the point where you are to stop to your own prudence.

You say you are impatient to see me again : you cannot doubt that my impatience is equal to yours ; but I have been detained by some forms of law in business between my father and me.

He is not so unreasonable as I expected; but I can account for that. The moment he heard that I was to ask him for nothing till his death he immediately consented. Farewell, my lovely friend. In a week I shall have the bliss of pressing you to my heart; and you will then secure the happiness of

Your ever faithful and affectionate,

CHARLES HENRY DE VILLEFRANCHE.

Complying with the advice ANGELICA received in this letter, she went to the convent once more, to endeavour to prevail with EUEENIA; but all her attempts were fruitless: she found her inflexible; and left her with regret.

VILLEFRANCHE returned at the time he had promised. The evening before that of his marriage he went with ANGELICA to the convent, but met with no better success in inducing EUGENIA to escape, than she had done.

As he found therefore that all endea-
vours were fruitless, and as VOLENCE,
from his literary engagements, found it
impossible to accompany them to *Swit-
zerland*, it was determined that the
young couple should travel for some
time into *England*, as VILLEFRANCHE
was anxious to study the boasted con-
stitution of that country himself, and
judge of its merits.

When VILLEFRANCHE and ANGELICA went to the convent to take leave of EUGENIA, they carried VOLENCE with them, and entreated her to consider him as her friend; to entrust him with her thoughts, and transmit them by his means to ANGELICA, who, in her turn, promised to write by the same means to EUGENIA.

The parting between the friends was affecting. VILLEFRANCHE and ANGELICA promised to make *Scellières* in their way, as they went to *Switzerland*, and EUGENIA returned to her cell, which since the departure of ANGELICA, she began to consider as her grave.

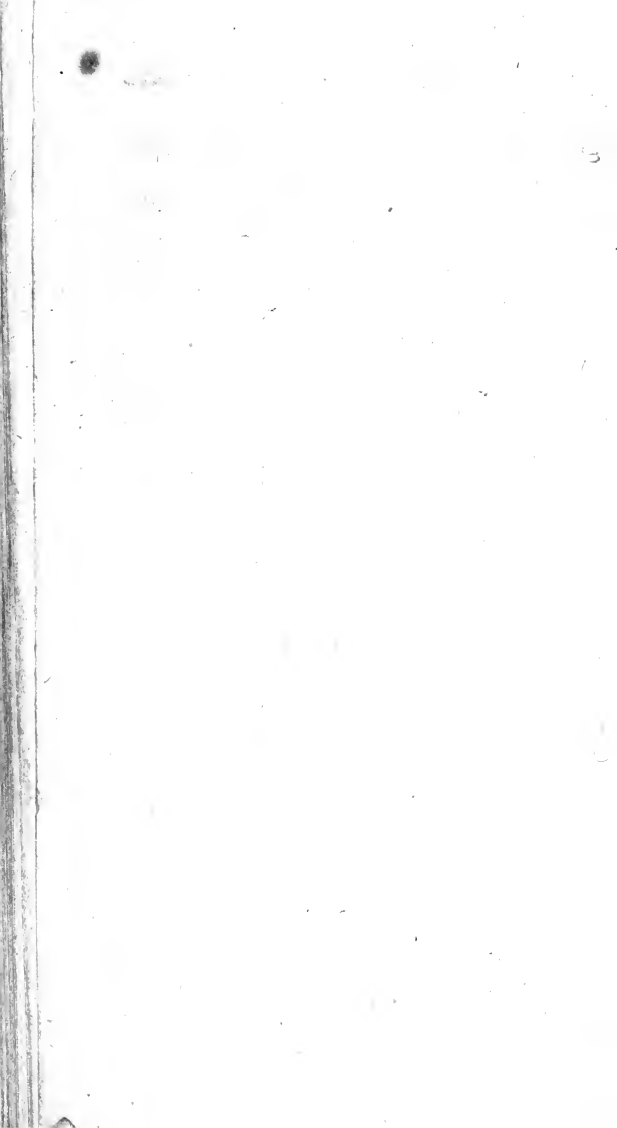
In their way to *England* VILLEFRANCHE and ANGELICA stopped some time at *Paris*, for he was anxious to introduce his wife to the wives and female relations of his philosophical friends. Into these societies was ANGELICA admitted with pleasure. She there received, instead of the incense so vainly offered to beauty, the more flattering homage of sincere friendship and regard, inspired by her superior understanding. It was not there imagined that a woman had not a right to talk upon serious subjects : every topic was there agitated without pedantry, or affectation. The morals of both the men and women were pure, but not rigid. Instead of wasting their time

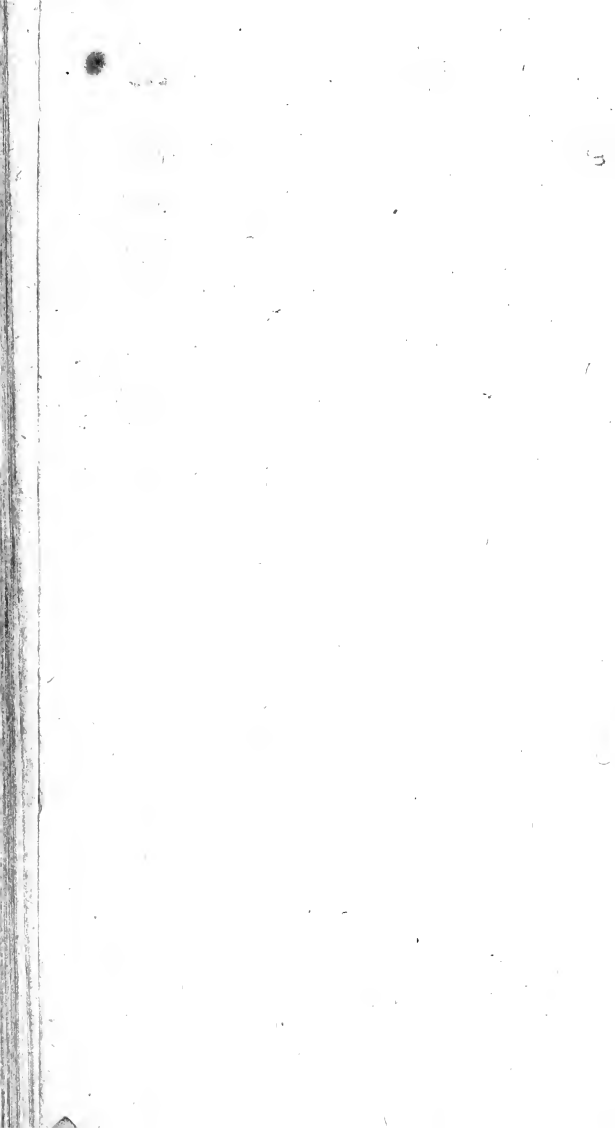
in private scandal, and play, like the brilliant societies of *Versailles*, they employed theirs in talking over the crimes and misfortunes of the world; and studying how they might be prevented. If these societies had not the appearance to strangers of being so gay as those in the higher circles, they were in reality much more so.

Reading, music, walking, conversation, and the theatre, diversified their evenings: and if VILLEFRANCHE had not been desirous of going to *England*, ANGELICA would never have wished to leave the society to which she had been so lately introduced. But the more she was delighted with it, the more she

regretted EUGENIA's situation ; the more she was distressed that so many talents and virtues were lost for ever in the gloom of a cloister. Before she left *Paris* she wrote her the following letter.

END OF VOL. I.





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